SERMONS FOR SUNDAYS

OWEN A. HILL, S.J.

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OR

THE SEED IS
THE WORD OF GOD

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BY

OWEN A. HILL, S.J.

WITHDRAWN

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PREFACE

This book is the growth of years in the ministry of saving souls, and its author trusts that the sermons it contains will have even a wider audience than they had when they were preached from the pulpit. His whole purpose in preaching them was the glory of God, and his whole purpose in printing them is the same. All of them, with the exception of one, are based on the gospels read at Mass on the different Sundays of the year. The sermon for Passion Sunday was prompted by the Epistle appointed for Mass that day, a passage from St. Paul to the Hebrews. The task the author set himself was to derive from each of the fifty-two Sunday-gospels the lesson of virtue it commends, without wandering far from the emotions uppermost in the mind of the Church during the several seasons of the Ecclesiastical year. The Saviour's joys and sorrows are the Church's joys and sorrows; and in this spirit she passes from Advent to Christmas, from Christmas to Lent, from Lent to Easter, from Easter to Pentecost, and then back to the starting-point in her journey. Desire agitates her bosom in Advent. At Christmas she is all joy and delight. During Lent penance and sorrow are her chiefest employment. Easter finds her singing a song of victory and triumph; and the long line of weeks following Pentecost are an era of effort towards the holiness or sanctification the Paraclete came to inaugurate and promote in the world. The orthodoxy of the work is vouched for by competent authority, the thoughts it develops are only such as would occur to ordinary minds, and the language employed is the best at the author's disposal. The topics treated are varied and numerous, and a cursory glance at the Index will acquaint the reader with the number and variety of the subjects discussed in the course of the work. Its contents may prove a help to preachers of the word, but its primary purpose is the edification and spiritual betterment of the faithful.

These sermons were not put hurriedly together, and they have the additional merit of having been practically tested in the pulpit. Large audiences in different cities have heard them, and have profited by the experience. And the fact may prove an incentive to laudable curiosity and zeal for religious instruction in larger groups of readers. One cannot well read without thinking about what he reads, and thought is right only when concerned with God, or virtue, or business in some way connected with both. Unhealthy food makes an unhealthy body, and unwholesome reading makes an unwholesome mind. The seed of parable is still the word of God; and, whether that word be spoken or printed, whether it be heard or read, it bears abundant fruit in hearts that lend it the encouragement of close attention and serious thought. St. Augustine and St. Ignatius read to kill time, and from the grave of the time they buried grew the flower of a happy eternity. Assisi and Xavier caught vagrant voices from Scripture, and the sound never died from their hearts till it lured them into Heaven. That miracles of the kind may follow this little book into the world, is the earnest prayer of its author.

Owen A. Hill, S. J.

Gonzaga College,
Washington, D. C.
Feast of the Visitation, 1926

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Epistle, Romans 13; 11–14 *Gospel, St. Luke 21; 25–34*

"Know that the Kingdom of God is at hand."
—St. Luke 21, 31.

In Church chronology Advent opens the year. It is a season of prayer and penance, meant to commemorate the four thousand years of waiting for the Messiah. Everything in the Advent liturgy points forward to Christmas. To wean our hearts from the short-lived pleasures of sense and sin, to make them ready for the Saviour's coming, this morning's gospel reminds us of the world's end, this morning's epistle exhorts us to shake off the easy ways of slumber, and buckle on the habiliments of war. "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea, and of the waves." St. Luke 21, 25. "It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Romans 13, 11. All the readings of the Divine Office are a wail and a lament, with that undertone of melancholy and subdued gladness characteristic of hope. Isaias, our man of tears, is the preacher. "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just; let the earth be opened, and bud forth a Saviour." Isaias 45, 8. "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us." Isaias 25, 9. "The wilderness shall rejoice, and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise. God Himself will come, and will save you. And the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and shall come into Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads." Isaias 35; 1, 2, 4, 10. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name

shall be called Emmanuel." Isaias 7, 14. "For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder" Isaias 9, 6.

Advent, therefore, is commemorative of the ages of preparation, preceding the birth of Christ. And all the prophets, with Isaias at their head, stood midway in the centuries between a promise and its fulfilment. The promise is written at the head of the Book. Its fulfilment had place four thousand years after its first utterance, and these prophets, looking before and behind, through the vista of years saw God in Eden with remorseful Adam and Eve, saw a Babe in the manger, and the dawn of a new era, destined to stretch from that first Christmas night to the end of time. All prophecy is based on these words of Genesis, "She shall crush thy head." Gen. 3, 15. They are golden words. They are at the same time a challenge issued to hell in the first flush of victory, and a pledge of future triumph for hell's repentant victims. They save divine justice, visited on original sin, from the reproach of severity, and absolutely preclude all possibility of despair. The faces of Adam and Eve fell, their hearts were bowed down with grief, when God opened their eyes to the magnitude of their crime. Had they passed from Eden to the outer world with no promise of a future Redeemer, hope would have abandoned their bosoms; and, beaten to the ground by misfortune, they could have only lain down to die. This hope of a Redeemer was the one ray of sunshine that lit the way of our first parents to their prison-house of atonement, the wild desert of an accursed earth. By way of prelude to their condemnation, the sovereign Judge had spoken of a mysterious woman, whose Son should undo the work of the serpent, and restore the race to its lost inheritance. "She shall crush thy head."

God, it would seem, had no mercy for the angels. In their case punishment followed fast and quick on the heels of offense. Justice made a loud cry, every energy at God's disposal rushed to the assistance of His justice, and in the twinkling of an eye all the claims of divine justice were satisfied. God had mercy in abundance for men, and, till death ensues, hope has a home in the human heart. Hope is not fulfilment; but human nature feels so equal to every test that fulfilment seems not far off when

hope is near. And so our first parents went bravely to their doom, and set about repairing their shattered fortunes. "She shall crush thy head," stayed their sorrow, sweetened their period of penance, and figured largely in the knowledge they conveyed to their children. Some time, they knew not when; at some place, they knew not where, a deliverer was to be born, able to reverse the decision of Heaven, and restore mankind to its lost inheritance. They must have been at great pains to impress this message on their descendants. It was the single pleasant memory they carried away with them from the wreck of Eden, and they knew that a people's hopes were centred in its accomplishment. And from the lips of their children's children it went down through the ages of preparation for the Messiah's coming, treasured always as a priceless legacy from parents accustomed to disaster to sons and daughters consecrated to the pitiful task of reparation and penance.

All men are descended from Adam, to whatever tribe on the face of the earth they belong, whatever corner of the globe they occupy, and all men in their origin had knowledge of the promised Redeemer, along with persuasive incentives to faith in Christ. If some nations and peoples fell away from the belief and lost the truth, the sad circumstance is due altogether to gross negligence or grosser crime somewhere along the line of their history. It is a settled conviction with most men that this salutary knowledge of a future Redeemer was as open a possession to the Gentiles as it was to the people of Israel; and, that, if it ever failed the Gentiles, the misfortune was the result of blameworthy indifference to God's preventing grace, or moral degradation unspeakably revolting. If in this age of enlightenment belief in Christ has not yet penetrated the strongholds of heathenism, it is because heathens inherited religious ignorance along with the iniquity of their progenitors. Cain and Abel, Seth and the other children of Adam, learned the promise at the knees of their parents, and in turn communicated it to posterity. Noah, after the deluge, sent it down through the ages with his three sons. After the dispersion of the people at the foot of the tower of Babel, belief in the Messiah journeyed to Babylon and the remotest ends of the earth. In the confusion of tongues that followed,

every language kept definite record of the promised Redeemer. The descendants of a downtrodden race hold memory of their parents' wrongs for centuries. Religious traditions are more sacred and lasting than even civil and political events; and a tradition as important in its bearings on the destiny of mankind as the promise of a Redeemer was faithfully transmitted, and long survived the ill usage of wickedness. One family, that of Israel, God's chosen people, preserved it intact and unbroken down through the four thousand years of expectation and waiting. "She shall crush thy head," was as much an inspiration to the Hebrews of Herod's time as it was in the days of Adam; and it sat closer than ever to the nation's heart. The tradition of a coming Redeemer had survived all the vicissitudes of desolation, persecution, captivity; and when the Redeemer came, the world outside of Israel was ready for His advent.

Small need to run through these long and dreary ages of preparation. God's hand is everywhere visible in the miraculous safeguarding of a people He had mercifully constituted the depositary and guardian of His message. Noah saved from the deluge; Abraham from the burning cities of the plain; Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, from their enemies; Moses, from Pharaoh and the slavery of Egypt; David, Solomon and the other kings, from hostile and formidable neighbors. Daniel was raised up to comfort Israel during the troublous period of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. Isaias and Jeremias, and the long line of prophets sang to a people's heavy woes of the days ahead, when the expected of nations should come and lead in smiling peace. The Medes and the Persians were sent to overthrow proud Babylon, and set the children of the promise free. And, when at last Pompey of Imperial Rome subdued them to his sway, the whole wide world through contact with their traditions was made aware of a wonder on the eve of accomplishment. Rome, therefore, and with Rome the world, was ready to receive the long expected of nations. His palace awaited its august occupant; and men's minds were greedy to welcome Him with loud acclaim, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and the King of glory shall enter in." Ps. 23, 7. The ages of preparation were accomplished. The serpent's

head is under the feet of Mary, to meet his long deferred doom in Mary's Son, Jesus.

In dispositions like these we must enter the sacred season of Advent. We must make our hearts ready. When the Lord Christ comes, let Him find us watching. We must not be of those who, when He came unto His own, received Him not. We must be wise virgins, with oil in our lamps, and we must prepare betimes. We are the patriarchs and prophets of old, the coming four weeks are the ages of preparation. We must lament our sins. We must in prayer and meditation feel all the weight of our bondage, and sigh for the deliverer. Like Daniel we must be men of desire, and shorten the period of expectancy by the fervor of our longing. Our Babe of Bethlehem is a jealous lover, and likes to be missed when absent. The prayer of the humble and contrite is a loud cry in His ear, and He hastens His steps in its direction. He is no proof against conspicuous and childlike fondness. He is a willing captive to the first heart capable of tender emotions. To secure His everlasting favor, is the one good gift able to round out our lives. Christmas knows no richer token. And the treasure lies hid in the field of our own activity. We have but to dig and delve, we have but to turn these hearts of ours inside out, and give God's grace a chance to renew them, make them sound and whole in confession. "As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the sons of God." St. John, 1, 12.

Today we stand at the threshold of Advent, and our faces are turned toward Bethlehem. Today, but four short weeks separate us from the starting point in our journey, from the initial day in every calendar. The flight of time is no longer measured by the creation of the world or the building of the City of Rome; but by the birth of Christ and the founding of the new Rome of St. Peter. And, though near the edge of the civil year's grave, we are assisting at no death-bed ceremony. The year dies but our mother lives forever; and we, her immortal sons, live forever as well. We are carried out and buried; but burial is only a ceremony significative of the soul's separation from the body, of the soul's flight from the body's earth to live in Heaven a purer and truer life. Our

mother passes from Advent to Christmas, only to begin another in the long round of years that make up her eternity; and she would have us follow on behind in the same spirit. Her language is essentially the language of life, and she never makes mention of death, except as a reminder of how holily we must live, to make ready against our going out to meet the King. Hence, she delivers to us in the Epistle of today's Mass a message brimful of activity; and, seeming entirely to forget that the civil year is on the verge of closing, speaks with a heart intent on the year about to open.

Awake, arise, is her watchword; work and win, her battle cry. It is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. The night is passed and the day is at hand. A lethargy has seized our limbs; and, unless in a period of grace like the present we shake it off, we are doomed. Enough of dreaming, enough of moping, enough of sin! We are the children of God's sunlight, and we have too long tarried in the realms of night. We are sons of God, who is all activity; and we have lain down and slept. We are brothers to the saints, and we have unblushingly done the works of demons. But this is a propitious time, the hour is ripe for a revolution in our methods. Salvation is nearer than we believed. Something is stirring in the Eastern skies. The dawn of a conqueror's coming fingers the clouds with the red tints of battle, and we must get into the fight. Praised be God for the favor, we have a whole month in which to make ready. Christmas morning is that far off, and Advent is a season of training. Prayer, fasting and alms-deeds are the sinews of war in the spiritual combat, and with steady application we can yet become soldiers worthy of our Captain. We can yet put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Prayer tempers a man's faith, and faith is this armor of light. Fasting weakens the animal, the man of sin in our members; and, when he is dead, the works of darkness are no more. Alms-deeds win for us the pity and the friendship of God; and with Him for comforter and friend we are secure. Let us, then, during this blessed season of Advent walk honestly in the day, no skulking cowards of the night. Let us make the record of these days such as angels would not blush to own. Let us feel able to carry our hearts pinned on

our sleeves, conscious of no hideous secrets, of no dark deeds we should like to conceal from the eyes of men. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, wear His holy mien, think His saving thoughts, and do the heroic deeds that purchased for Him a seat at the right hand of God. And let us never forget the profound truth with which the Apostle closes his exhortation, "Make no provision for the flesh in the concupiscences." A disturbance in mid-ocean causes an endless succession of waves between that point and the distant shore. None the less surely does one sin pave the way for another. Every single concession made to temptation has baneful after-effects. Defeat breeds defeat; and never yet did a man go wrong without wandering farther from the narrow path than he thought he would wander. Be wise, therefore, in time. Add no fuel to a fire that already burns fiercely enough. Remember that every victory won over self and sin is surety for a second victory in the near future. Remember that any violence done passion now will be the rich occasion of thanksgiving songs in the days to come.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Epistle, Romans 15; 4–13 *Gospel, St. Matthew 11; 2–10*

"What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken by the wind?"—St. Matthew 11, 7.

The gospels of this season of Advent are glowing eulogies of St. John the Baptist, last in the long line of prophets, the Precursor of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Today we are invited to study three of his most conspicuous characteristics, and introduce them into our own lives. They are penance, zeal and steadfastness in the Faith, or a soldierly Christian spirit. John was no man clothed in soft garments. His garments were of camels' hair and a leathern girdle about his loins; his meat was locusts and wild honey." St. Matthew, 3, 4. John was an angel before Christ's face, to prepare the way. "John stood and two of his disciples. And beholding Jesus walking, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God. And the two disciples followed Jesus." St. John 1, 35. John was no reed shaken by the wind. "Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife. For John said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her." St. Matthew, 14, 13. Penance, therefore, and zeal, and steadfastness are the three virtues that cemented an everlasting friendship between the Baptist and the Messiah. They are passports to the company of the elect, and their owners are objects of pleasure in God's eyes. And first with regard to penance. It is of two kinds, affecting now the body, now the soul. We call the first kind exterior; the other, interior. Outside of the Catholic Church the world is loud in its condemnation of the seeming cruelty saints practise on their own bodies. Fasting is denounced as an insult to God Almighty and a species of slow suicide. Whipping of the body with cords or chains is styled superstitious and fanatical insanity. Long vigils before the altar are irreverently al-

luded to as a sure token of madness or mental imbecility. This same world, strange to say, admires the self-sacrifice of a mother who denies herself food to save a child from starvation. This same world applauds the heroism of a soldier home from the wars, with his body full of scars and wounds. It praises the devotedness of a friend, nursing back a sick friend to health at the expense of food, and sleep, and needed rest. When a child, a country, a friend, are the objects of our pity and heroism, the sinful world is content; but when God is their object, the sinful world is up in arms against the homage. The world of sin is on no friendly terms with the God of holiness, and takes offense at every act of reverence done Him. But we have made God's friendship the end and aim of our existence, the fond aspiration of our life. He has stamped with His approval these little deeds of violence done the body, and we are determined to add to His pleasure, no matter what the cost. With St. Paul we chastise our bodies. 1 Cor. 9, 27. We fast, we scourge ourselves, we shorten our sleep, we subject ourselves to bodily discomfort. God is no torturer. He derives no delight from the agony of His creatures. But He thoroughly understands the mechanism of our being. He knows well that a man's heart is the field of many a battle between the flesh and the spirit. He knows that sin is rooted in man's desire for bodily comfort and luxury of sense. He knows that every victory won over the flesh adds new strength to the spirit. Like a skilful captain, He wants us to attack His enemy and ours in its stronghold. He wants us to save our immortal souls at the expense of whatever physical pain, and wants us to fight out sin by denying these bodies of ours, the seat of appetite for forbidden pleasures. There is a very marked connection between passion and robustness of body. Temperance in food and drink keeps the blood cool. Every pang inflicted on the body serves at least to remind us that we have not here a lasting city, and that we are journeying towards a home where pain shall be no more. A habit of self-inflicted pain is a most effective remedy against running counter to God's law for purposes of pleasure. All this would be true, even if God granted no special measure of grace to heroism of this sort. The truth gathers force, when

we reflect that God, who will not be outdone in generosity, rewards every single act of bodily mortification with a new supply of grace. And a new supply of grace invariably wins for its recipient a new degree of glory.

The Master had interior penance in mind, when He said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," St. Matthew, 16, 24. This interior penance is as much superior to exterior as the soul is to the body. It is a habit or fixed disposition of mind, whereby we are ever on the alert to cross even our most innocent inclinations. It is in some sort a remodeling of our worse selves along heroic lines. Man's heart is a network of desires. Of these, some are virtuous; other some are wholly innocent, without being positive helps to sanctification; and others are clearly wicked, downright hindrances to salvation. Virtuous inclinations cannot, of course, be too much encouraged; and, as they always embody a certain amount of difficulty for human nature, mortification has a wide field for exercise in their pursuit. Wicked inclinations, wishes, with hell stamped all over them, must be done to death even before they begin to fully breathe in our bosoms. And penance is not the virtue concerned with them. Common every-day piety, such as the most ordinary Christian professes, makes it imperative to slay such wishes. To harbor or encourage them is to sin, and penance is something more than the mere avoidance of sin. God wants us to deny ourselves on occasions even harmless gratifications, because such heroism is a choice act of homage to His majesty, because He is aware how impossible it will be for soldiers thus assiduous in His service to play Him false, when sin crosses their path and temptingly beckons them to grosser and intenser pleasures. He puts a higher etimate on this second kind of penance than He puts on mere chastisement of the body. In fact, mere chastisement of the body without accompanying interior penance is of little value in God's sight. Heart-service is what He especially demands of His subjects; and He accepts our fastings and scourgings only inasmuch as they manifest and promote inner submission of the heart and will. Bodily penance is a plain

way of declaring to the world our sincere conversion of heart, an effective way of training our affections and aspirations in the school of God's discipline. If, therefore, we want to become closer imitators of Jesus, we must first of all learn how to put aside with a refusal promptings as free from wickedness as a baptized infant's smile. After this first lesson the cross can prove no heavy burden, and every roughness in the path to perfection will lose its power to discomfort and incommode us.

And now about the degrees of mortification. Saints recognize three steps in the ladder to this difficult virtue's summit. All three are embodied in that beautiful saying transferred by St. Paul from Psalm 43, 22 to the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans, "For thy sake, we are put to death all the day long." Romans, 8, 36. "We are put to death"— The first step is a state of passivity, in which we receive with resignation every trial God sends us. In this stage we are in the condition of a sheep led to slaughter, a criminal led out to execution. We may not, perhaps, run to meet God with a song of thanksgiving on our lips; but we bow our heads to the blow, and refuse to break the stillness with a word of complaint. We may not kiss the hand raised to strike us; but we make no endeavor to thrust it aside. We may not leave the beaten path to look for trials and troubles; but we are at least generous enough to stand bolt upright when they meet us, and nurse our damaged feelings without a murmur. When one weighs the amount of worry undergone by worldly friends, who twist and turn to avoid the shafts of misfortune; when one considers the mad efforts of the irreligious to escape the discomforts incident to human life, he cannot but thank religion for this first lesson in mortification, he cannot fail of seeing what a long stride towards the peace and contentment of Heaven he has taken, who has climbed no higher than this first step in the ladder. "For thy sake"— The second step is a state of activity, in which we receive with thankfulness humiliations, contempt, and ill treatment. To a man in the first degree humiliations, contempt and ill treatment lose none of their bitter aspect. They are disagreeable, harsh and galling. But to a man in the second degree they wear altogether another counte-

nance. They assume the blessed shape of favors vouchsafed by a kind Father. They are borne for this Father's sake, and the thought is honey in a cup of bitterness.

Faith for a space in the promise,
Omnipotence pledged and sealed;
Patience with wounds made by sorrow,
That Jesus in others healed;
Are the heritage left by the Master
To you and to me for a test,
Of our worthiness, fond heart, to enter
The blissfuller rest of the blest.

Suffering loses all of its edge, and opportunities to suffer are welcomed, yea counted and recorded with delight. We are not courageous enough to pray God to multiply our sufferings; but we are now no great remove from this third degree; and, without experiencing any difficulty in resigning ourselves into God's hands, we invite Him, when face to face with a threatened sorrow, to let the blow descend.

"All the day long"— The third step is a state of sleepless activity, in which we ask for more and greater humiliations, afflictions, and even persecutions. A man in this third degree is impatient of comfort and ease. His constant attitude of mind is that of St. Teresa, making her sublime prayer, "To suffer or die, O Lord, to suffer or die!" When this third step in the ladder is reached, the end is reached. There are no more possible conquests in the field of mortification. God answers His servants' prayers, when their burden is so like the painful life His divine Son lived. He sends sorrow in abundance, and these servants of the Cross reap a rich harvest of merit. Humiliations are heaped upon them at home, contempt upon them abroad. Friends and strangers combine to persecute them even unto death. But men skilled in the science and practice of the saints know what a store of consolation and strength the Master pours into the souls of such servants. They are living witnesses to the truth that God heals every hurt He makes, and has oil and balm for every would He inflicts. This manner of life is the peace of Heaven transplanted to earth. Heaven is absence of sorrow, and the very

next thing to having no sorrow at all, is to cultivate a longing for it, to lose all dread of it by encountering it frequently and touching it familiarly.

Passing now to the Baptist's zeal for souls, experience is reminder that the world of today is in sore need of help as regards salvation. Men, women and children are flocking in droves to hell, and the sad procession is not made up entirely of heathens, never yet touched by the light of the gospel. It is not entirely made of up savages sunk in barbarism, whose depravity and filthy practices have thus far proved a barrier to the entrance of God's grace into their hearts. Men and women in our own street are numbered in that procession, and the saddest thing faith knows is consciousness that sons and daughters of God, whom we love as we love our lives, are deaf to our entreaties, and in spite of our efforts, plunge headlong towards eternal ruin. In the salvation of any soul two factors play a part, the grace of God, and man's own coöperation with that grace. Grace is God's part of the work, and it is of faith that God never yet failed in His half of the work. It is of faith that He equips every man born into the world, under whatever sky and in whatever circumstances, with a measure of grace abundantly able to carry him through temptation up to the throne of God. But there is a graver aspect to the question. Another element enters the problem of mankind's salvation, an element that more nearly concerns ourselves. God calls us all to help Him save souls. We have a duty towards our neighbor in this matter, and some holy writers venture the statement that the world of sin is as far from God as it is today only because God's friends either forget or neglect to run to His assistance. The prosperity of a nation, as well as of the families that compose it, is the growth of harmony among individuals. One citizen in a commonwealth as truly depends on every other citizen as children at home depend on their parents. This law of relationship is aptly styled the law of mutual influence, and exerts, no doubt, as wide a sway in the spiritual kingdom as it exerts in affairs of government. Therefore, every Christian, who fails to do what in him lies for the salvation of souls, is responsible in the eyes of God for the moral ruin that encompasses our universe. It is not enough, then, to save our own

souls, without putting to good use the means at our disposal for saving others. Of course, this obligation rests more heavily on them that minister at God's altar, on the men and women, who by priesthood and the religious profession consecrate themselves to works of zeal in behalf of the neighbor. But, though lighter, there exists an obligation of exactly the same nature, and none the less real, for men and women in the world. The priest is authoritatively commissioned to administer the sacraments and preach the word of God; and, the better to discharge the twofold duty, he cuts loose from every other responsibility, from every other tie of family, home and friends. But you are all priests, you are all apostles, you are all savers of souls in a limited but true sense. Therefore, take up the good work, the apostolate of preaching Catholic truth by the example of a holy life. If mankind is going to be saved at all from its present peril, it has to be saved by prayer. Colossal works of the kind call for colossal strength; and the only weapon on earth vested with the omnipotence of God is prayer. He has Himself said it, and His word stands, "Ask, and you shall receive," St. John, 16, 24. The declaration is limited to no class of favors, it is restricted to no class of suppliants. Therefore, even the conversion and sanctification of the world are with prayer possible, and easy of accomplishment. Therefore, saints and sinners alike wield with God Almighty a power that brooks no interference. Let not that power lie idle. Hear the Lord God's cry for help, and run to His assistance. He owns men's souls. He died in torments on Calvary to purchase them. And all hell is stirring to make void that purchase, to rob the Cross of victory. With our coöperation in prayer, God can do everything. He can save the world. Without it, He can do nothing. He must sit down in idle patience, and see the enemy of souls drag to the farthest dungeons in hell these sons of His love and His blood. Here then is the opportunity of your life. Propitiate this judge, who on the last day shall eternally fix your destiny. Come between Him and His enemies in life that after death He may throw round you the ægis of His protecting love.

Besides being a hermit and an apostle, John the Baptist was a martyr, surrendering his life in defense of religion and

morality. The emotions awakened within us, as we contemplate in spirit this gladiator in the arena of God's cause, are our own, and the world cannot deprive us of proud moments like these. Sacred memories necessarily crowd upon us, and high above all the sad mementoes Job's bugle-call to battle rings loud and clear, "Man's life upon earth is a warfare," Job 7, 1. Deeds of hardihood and fields of blood are the soldier's proper element; and a martyr's death is most consonant with a Catholic's vocation. But martyrdom is the richest gift at God's disposal, and He does not squander it on unworthy lives. The victims most pleasing in His holy sight are men pure and free from all taint. And if tomorrow a persecution, a religious war broke out in our midst, all could not die, even if they wished to do so; and angel-hands would appear on the heads of hidden saints among us, to muster out of the ranks a chosen band of champions, brave enough to live for God, and therefore all worthy to have a period put to their labors. The Baptist's holy life forbids us to hope for blood-stained laurels, unless we shake off our sluggishness, and win in time of peace the smile that presages victory. Besides, the world has undergone a wide change since Herod's time. We live in an age and among a people, where enmity to God has laid aside the goblin mask of terror, to assume the more deadly aspect of a singing-girl. We are compassed on every side by sights calculated to wring the heart with anguish. We are confronted with the conspicuous lives of men, who, while enjoying a reputation for that very holiness we labor to attain, say themselves nay in none of the suggestions of clamorous human nature. The world is at peace with iniquity, and realizing from the experience of centuries that it is a losing game to quarrel with virtue, it no longer persecutes as of old, but only bids away from its door the bearer of God's message. If he will not away, it immediately sets to work with other engines of war than axes, racks and gibbets. It wheedles him, it cajoles him, it spreads before his startled gaze treasures less distant, less spiritual than the joy he awaits; and, alas, it reckons up at the end of one year more perverts than the wild beasts and the lighted fires of Nero could frighten from the faith in ten. The world, then, will not close with us in mortal combat. But

we are soldiers; and, if the enemy who is in secret wronging God, our love, refuses to fight, we must provoke him to battle. We must obtrude upon him at seasonable and at unseasonable hours the salutary thoughts that harass him. We must above all by the daily tenor of our lives show him that faith, and mortification, and self-restraint, and manly honesty with God and conscience, are all that we claim them to be. We can yet taste the exhilaration of tumultuous victory, there yet remains a field on which to exercise our valor. Our passions never surrender, never tire; and our hearts are the scenes of hourly conflicts that only God and ourselves witness. There are deeper wounds than swords can make and the many-headed hydra of fable taxed the strength of Hercules no more severely than the dogged expedients of our worse selves torture us. We must, like Peter, walk at another's bidding; we must at every turn contradict no less dear a friend than self is to self. We are our own appointed executioners, and as such we must never sleep, never lay down the sword. Does a strict performance of duty, or a stout assault on Heaven, convey no notion of hardships? The Catholic, who thinks this way, is not creditably filling his post, or he is unconsciously giving the lie to Him who once said, "and from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." St. Matthew 11, 12. He forgets that the earnest soldier is more on his guard against cowardice and sloth in the peace-intervals between war and war than he is when the fight is on. He forgets the story of Samson, who, when on the battle-field, could crush Philistines by tightening his fist upon them, and yet felt his superhuman strength ooze through the tips of his fingers, when the woman Delilah stroked the hair on his head. Let no one, therefore, deceive himself. Martial music and the roar of cannon are but the outward flourishes and the pomp of war. Though they are silent the war goes on; and their silence only makes the reality sterner. We are still soldiers, and we are embarked on even a more perilous enterprise than that on which the fame of the martyred Baptist rests. God demands of us another sacrifice, the sacrifice entailed in an exact observance of the laws of our Church; the sacrifice of humility, of obedience, of faith; the

sacrifice of living in the world without being of the world. "My heart is ready, O God; my heart is ready." Ps. 56, 8. With this for rallying cry, let us press forward. The slave, who throws down his arms and runs away, deserves no better fate than hell. No mercy short of Heaven's infinite forgiveness can pardon us even momentary remissness in the strife. But, thank God, that full measure of forgiveness is ever at our bidding; and, if in moments of fatigue and forgetfulness we rest on our arms and parley with the enemy, it is not yet all up with us, we are not yet wretched deserters fit only to be executed. We can do new homage to our Captain, we can bestir ourselves, and mayhap before the night comes down, we can die beneath the enemy's breastworks, with our faces towards the foe and our swords in our hands. Then can we stand for all eternity somewhere at least on the distant verge of God's elect, and with our eyes fixed on the circle of martyred brothers closer to the throne, can hear that colloquy the exile on Patmos heard, "And one of the ancients answered and said to me, These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple. And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them. They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the water of life and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Apoc. 7, 13.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Epistle, Philippians 4; 4–7 *Gospel, St. John 1; 19–28*

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."—St. John 1, 23.

St. John the Baptist, Precursor to the Messiah, fills a unique place in the history of Christianity. Clad in garments of camels' hair, with a leathern girdle about his loins, he towers like a heroic figure of ancient art in the first pages of the gospel. He is a preacher of the whirlwind type. All his fiery eloquence turns on penance and the need of radical reform. Like the avenging angel of Israel in Egypt, he breathes fire, the fire of the vengeance of God in anger. He has an axe in his hands, to be laid to the root of every tree that yields not good fruit. He has a winnowing-fan, to sweep clean the barn-floor of the universe, and separate the chaff from the wheat. With three bold dashes of speech he dismisses the three classes of men, that journeyed out to the desert to seek his advice. To the Pharisees He counselled humility, "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father"; to the publicans, strict compliance with duty, "Do what is appointed you"; and to the bluff old soldiers, gentleness and contentment, "Do violence to no man, and be content with your pay." His tempestuous zeal scrupled not to call things by their proper names. Cringing hypocrites he denominated a generation of vipers. With almost reckless daring he pursued crime to the very palace door of Herod, and armed with credentials from God, upbraided the king, demanding the instant removal of that vile creature of incest, Herodias, from his house. His mission was a failure with the mighty and the influential in Israel. Herod eventually ordered his head stricken from his shoulders to satisfy the whim of a shameless dancing-girl. The Pharisees, sneering at his sermon, marched down to hell by stages that we can now measure. They plotted and compassed the death of their Mes-

siah, and finished with the blood of God on their own hands and on the heads of their children. His mission bore abundant fruit with the poor and humble. The Lord Christ recruited His college of apostles from St. John's followers. At least six of them owed their vocation under God to companionship with the Baptist. And the word of God always gets a fair hearing in an audience composed of the poor. No hostile influence is tugging at the poor man's heart for possession, and the licentiousness of wealth has not deadened his soul to the Spirit's whispers.

St. John was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and successive generations of preachers have taken up the cry. Amid the tumult of battles, the crash of falling empires, the birth and the death of new and old nations, for now 1900 years that cry is ringing loud and strong above the surrounding noises, a message to all the tribes and all the peoples of the earth, warning the nations of dangers ahead, and rallying the sons of God to the standard of Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and mankind is drifting from Him, to lose itself in the abyss of greed; mankind is walking headlong into the night of unbelief; mankind is dying a spiritual death in multitudinous droves. Small need to call our attention to the evils of the times. We are thoroughly well acquainted with our surroundings. In 1900 the world was a paradise of delight, in 1918 the world is a waste of ruins, with people from everywhere flocking to Paris, to mend and patch things, to reconstruct things along the lines of justice, freedom and democracy. In 1900 everything about and around us was a reminder of old Babylon, old Greece and old Rome, when they were on the point of falling a prey to God's enkindled wrath. Kings in their palaces were drinking wine out of golden and silver vessels, consecrated to the service of God's altar, and ruthlessly stolen by the mailed hand of unholy conquest. Emperors were drunk with the blood of martyrs, and riding like mad buffoons between rows of confessors and virgins, tied in sacks saturated with oil, and cruelly set on fire to light their path of demoniac triumph. Ill-gotten wealth was grinding the poor into the dust, and overweening might was seated on a throne at the head of the universe. God's

prophets were called in and laughed at for their interpretation of the ominous words, Mane, Thekel, Phares, engraved on the wall by the mysterious hands of unseen ghosts. The geese in the Capitol made unwonted noises, and the proud lords of the Capitol refused to take the warning seriously. Then, as now, greed of money was the root of all evil, and disaster grew as a tree from the root, to overshadow the land with its baleful branches. The wealth of our country can with truth be said to belong to no large number of individuals. This man owns a hundred millions of it; that man, another hundred; and so on down the list of prominent millionaires. Large fortunes are seldom accumulated in a hurry without some species of crookedness in the transaction. There are many different ways of stealing. To knock a man down and rob him, lands the thief in jail. But to corner a market, to oppress labor, to take mean advantage of a poor man's necessities, these are not crimes in the eyes of the law. God, however, takes offense at these politer thefts, and God constitutes Himself their avenger. Money inhumanly wrung from the life-blood and the sweat of human slaves, carries a curse with itself, and that curse lights somewhere with fearful havoc. Brutish enjoyment of wealth, acquired by foul means, is its own heaviest punishment, and the evils that follow in its train are interminable.

And this was the condition that confronted us at the opening of the twentieth century. History is witness that an era of commercial prosperity unfailingly gives way to an era of sottishness and beastliness. The rich fathers of today are sacrificing their energies, their time and their wealth to put into the hands of their spendthrift sons the instruments of suicidal pleasure. Signs of the portending evil are abroad in the streets. Even now the lethargy begotten of sin is settling on the owners of the world's wealth. The masters of colossal fortunes are taking their seats at the banquet table and, while the music plays, fools of sinners dance. In some localities divorce court calendars read strangely like the newspaper list of notables at a society function. And women, married twice, thrice over, are nothing short of paid mistresses flitting like gilded butterflies from one rich establishment to another. Oh the shame of

the thing, oh the weight of divine wrath in store for this mockery of God's holy law! War, murder, dishonesty, uncleanness, all these demons hot from hell, are marshalling their forces to stalk like red ghosts across the field of the years ahead. And why? Simply because faith has been already shaken to its very foundation by false teachers, simply because the sanctity of marriage has been all but dethroned by the demon of divorce. In no few instances God is being pushed from the universe by the very men whose profession consecrates them to His especial service, by men whose robes of office mark them off for champions of God's cause. Pulpits are being turned into fortresses of the devil, unbelief is being openly preached in what men call churches; and when a man's own household makes common cause with his enemies, defeat is, humanly speaking, inevitable. Morally speaking the times are sadly out of joint and in sore need of reformers, built more along the lines of St. John the Baptist. We have so-called reformers a-plenty, the city swarms with them; but they are not of the right type, not of the kind calculated to reform. They begin at the wrong end of the difficulty. They leave their own proper flocks in strange confusion, and start work by endeavoring to introduce order among outsiders. Things at home are ugly and misshapen, and the outsiders they strive to influence for good know only too well the sad state of their teachers' domestic concerns. No man or woman of sin but knows that divorce is open defiance of the law of God, and that a new marriage during the lifetime of either party is bigamy or concubinage, call it what you will. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder," St. Matthew 19, 6. No man or woman of sin but knows that concubinage on the avenue is as vile a thing in God's eyes as concubinage in the slums. God is no respecter of persons, or places, or conditions. His law is the same for king and peasant, for prince and pauper. Sin in the garb of certain surroundings may dazzle and so much the less hurt our sensitiveness. But God is above being dazzled, and He sees things as they are, in all their native horridness. When a reformer lends the ritual of his church and his own august presence to add solemnity to so libidinous a contract as the

attempted marriage of two divorced persons, then that reformer deserves only to be laughed at for his pains, if he preaches morality to men and women of the street.

And where are the friends of God going to stand in this conflict? God calls us all to help Him win souls. He owns the world. He died in torments on Calvary to redeem it. And all hell is stirring to make void His purchase to rob His cross of victory. Hear the Lord God's cry for help, and run to His assistance. Prayer and the example of a holy life are our weapons of war. Organization is our watchword. To win at all we must go into the struggle on fire with that soldierly Christian spirit, which animated the heroic zeal of the Baptist. Our Church is a military organization, and he misses entirely its purpose, who fancies it a praying body, content to let the world go what way it will, if only no harm is done the private piety and devotion of its members. We Catholics must lead the way, we must take an active part in history's events. We must fill the public eye with reminders of virtue, and religion, and God. We must keep the trumpet of God's glory to our lips, ready to blow everywhere tidings of God's law and His mercies. We must be soldiers equipped and ready for opposition, prepared for the exigencies of war, for wound, and smart, and death. In His own lifetime on earth, our Captain and Leader Christ told us what to expect. He issued an open declaration of war, when He said, "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" St. Luke 12, 49. He summons His friends to war, not to peace. Violence is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven. In the nature of things, truth can never be on terms of peace with falsehood. We must be aggressively Catholic. No compromise with error, is Rome's watchword; and it must be ours. When public opinion is wrong, we must be superior to public opinion, and frown it down. We must be faithful, true and loyal to self, no matter what the cost. We must sacrifice the friend who proves an obstacle to our piety or faith. We must be courageous to tell the truth about our belief, even if the heavens fall, even if ridicule, scorn and contempt follow. Better to face a mere man's displeasure than play false to God, and deserve eternal condemnation. The truth seldom alienates friends; and

the only souls outside the fold worth converting are the men and women with character enough left to respect the Catholic who values his Church as he values his life, and scorns to hide or belittle its teaching.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Epistle, 1 Cor. 4, 1–5 *Gospel, St. Luke 3; 1–6*

"And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
—St. Luke 3, 6.

In the Advent gospels these are the last words of the Messiah's Precursor, St. John the Baptist. They point the way to Christmas. Our new-born King is the salvation of God; and, in the person of the shepherds, all flesh saw Christ that first Christmas morning, nineteen hundred years ago. The government is on His shoulders, and He is appealing today, as He appealed through the ages, for the loyal allegiance of honest hearts and willing hands. To prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight His paths, we must conceive an enthusiasm, able to put us on our knees in the straw before the manger, ready to swear undying fidelity to the Saviour of mankind and the King of the centuries. He has graces in His hands to send us for the purpose. He is solicitous to make us thoroughly understand His call. He can pour into our limbs the strength needed to execute His holy will with promptitude and diligence. To set in motion all the energies of our courage, to light within us the sacred fire of inspiration, we must use every endeavor of mind and fancy to make this call of the Lord Christ a living and present reality. In the scheme of activity proposed to itself by religion, Christ is King, with the world of men's hearts for subjects, with earnest Christians for rank and file of the King's army. There ought to be enough chivalry still left on the earth to swell the Lord's army to vastly larger proportions; and, if faith were not practically dead or weak unto death in many bosoms, our neighbors would be with us in this campaign for souls. The trouble of the thing is that the warfare, in which we are engaged, is hidden from the vulgar eye, and only the elect, the chosen few, see it in all its stern reality. Peter

the Hermit and St. Bernard, to rally Crusaders in historic times, had only to mount the rising ground, hold aloft the emblem of salvation, and invite men to pin on their sleeves the red badge of faith fighting heathendom for the holy places. The symbol used for uniform was stirring, the romance and adventure attached to warring with stout foes in foreign lands were alluring. For these brave Crusaders were to march away to what must have seemed the other side of the world, they were to risk their lives in the grandest of causes, and were to measure swords with antagonists that fought like demons. War was a pastime, a holiday, when all men were soldiers and knighthood was manhood in its fullest development. Piety in any other form than that of war against the unbeliever, would have appealed all too faintly to the rugged heroes of those sterner times. Business is today the paramount issue, and money getting, and that greed of pleasure which invariably settles on a long period of peace. The battles we have to do in God's name are bloodless, our foes are those principalities of the air mentioned by St. Paul; and the victories honest men win over passion and sin are not noised beyond the threshold of their own consciences. But the combat is just as grim and just as real as any ever fought by the Crusaders; and if we could borrow from the example of our warrior-ancestors in the faith some little of the chivalric spirit that animated them, we should profit immensely by the exchange. More vigor needs to be poured into our efforts towards holiness; and, if we are going to convert the world at all, we must exert a stouter energy, we must assume a fuller measure of boldness. We can help ourselves to put on these sentiments by instituting a comparison between our sluggish conduct and that of the heroes, who in the glorious summer of chivalry endeavored with sword, and axe, and lance, to prove their loyalty to faith, and Christ, and religion. Holiness is a hard fight, our Church is a military organization, and we are lineal descendants of the Crusaders. To go into the battle equipped with their ardor and courage, we must cut loose from the mercenary spirit of our times, and journey back over the ruins of centuries to the golden age of chivalry, the days of the Crusaders.

We must set before our eyes an earthly King with a com-

mission from God Almighty to muster an army, sworn to the permanent establishment of virtue on earth and the utter destruction of infidelity, heresy, and sin. This King is armed with credentials from on High, rendering it imperative in conscience on every individual Christian to pay him respect, reverence and entire obedience. Apart even from the supernatural seal of God's approbation, this King has every good quality to recommend him. He is a giant in stature. In energy and military skill he easily surpasses Alexander and Cæsar. He is another Napoleon, with the added gift of God's blessing at his back. He has been for years in the field, and not a single defeat is marked up to his name. He is known far and near; and enjoys a world-wide reputation for valor and success. The flower of the world is in his army. He is a saint as well as a soldier; and, like Moses of old and Josue, the leaders of God's people, he is in direct communication with the Lord of the universe. He has miracles at his disposal, and can summon from the empty air plagues more destructive than Egypt's. The world is his audience, and with the ears of the fancy we can hear him acquit himself of this stirring address, "Men, it is my purpose to subdue infidel nations, and win the universe to Christ. Whoever wants to follow me, must wear the same uniform, and take the same risks. By night and by day he must stand shoulder to shoulder with me in work, guard-duty and danger. Every man's share in the fruits of victory and triumph shall be measured by his share in the hardships and labors of war. During this campaign no death shall ensue from wound or disease. When the war is over there shall be no empty places in the ranks. My soldiers to a man shall march back home free from hurt and harm. These are assurances from Heaven, not empty promises or surmises. You take no chance of loss, you run no risk of serious danger. Victory is sure. And we are embarked on an undertaking that smiles to the heart of the God of justice." In this campaign for souls what ought to be the sentiments of men animated with faith, on fire with zeal for the growth of God's kingdom?

And now we make passage from the field of fancy to the world of fact and reality. If this earthly king and his declaration of war deserve attention and respect, how much more de-

serving of the same are Christ, our eternal King and His invitation? His is a spiritual Kingdom; and, though not seen of the eye, sits close to the hearts of His followers. It has its foundation in faith; and faith is no fancy, but as stern a fact as any within our experience. We have no King but Christ. He still lives and reigns; and we Catholics ought to be uneasy and discontented, till Christ sits at the head of the universe, with every man, woman and child on its surface doing homage at His feet. We must be emissaries of God, moving in and out with a mission and a message among them that walk in darkness. No true Catholic can shirk the responsibilities of an apostle. As children of the promise, we have a duty towards the lost sheep of Israel. The extension of the truth is dependent on our individual efforts, and we are falling away from a sacred trust, we are false to a solemn obligation, if we neglect a single opportunity to spread the growth of virtue among men, and swell the army of the Lord Christ. Prayer, good example and the ministry of a seasonable word, are the weapons at our disposal, and we must not allow the rust to gather on them. We must pray for the world's conversion with all the fervor, and frequency, and downright earnestness, that characterize our prayers for private blessings, temporal and spiritual. We must let the light of our conduct shine before men, and have no part in deeds that were better perpetrated in the dark, because calculated to reflect shame and dishonor on the glorious flag we Catholics by divine dispensation follow. We must keep our eyes fixed on our Captain and Leader Christ, we must keep His footprints as we march to the music of victory through temptation and sin; and our ears must never be empty of His ringing appeal to arms. In full view of the whole world He plants His colors, and rallies men around with these stirring words, "The world is mine by the double right of creation and redemption. God made man; and, when man, by transgressing, stupidly threw away the gift of life, God made him anew by redemption. Hell disputes my sway, and hell's minions make daily inroads on my territory. It is my design to vindicate my rights, and fight every enemy out. The war may be prolonged. It shall certainly teem with sharp and decisive battles. But victory is sure. Omnipotence is at

my bidding, and I know whereof I speak. I lead the way, my men need only follow. I take posts of danger, and shield my soldiers from loss of life and limb. Their wounds shall never reach the heart, but merely tear the skin and quickly heal. This war shall last till victory crowns our arms. When the enemy is overthrown, I enter my Father's Kingdom of glory in all the triumph of a conqueror, and every man of the ranks with me. The one requisite condition for a share in the spoils of war, is work, faithful, unremitting, heroic work. In my Kingdom reward is the wages of labor. He who is not with me, is against me. Every strong arm in the world is needed, and cowards are by the very fact enlisted in the ranks of the enemy. There is no middle course open. Neutrality is out of the question. Join the ranks, or perish with the heathen!" Enlistment in this army, is a condition for membership in the Catholic Church. Every man of common sense ought to be greedy for a place in Christ's army. If men oustide of our Church only knew as we the full significance of our gift of faith, they would on business principles dedicate themselves whole and entire to Christ's cause. No thought of easy comfort, no mean desire of unworthy pleasure, could induce men deserving the name to sit idly by, deaf to these words of encouragement, these burning threats of disgrace and loss. Men with a spark of heroism in their natures, would not rest satisfied with places in the ranks as common soldiers. They would pitch their ambitions higher. They would want posts on the skirmish line. They would be impatient of dull waiting for the enemy's attack. They would make frequent rushes into his territory, and signalize themselves by deeds of bravery and daring. They would voluntarily offer themselves to their Lord and Captain Christ for arduous tasks and conspicuous positions in the field. They would sell all their possessions, and turn the proceeds into the King's treasury, proud of the chance to contribute of their wealth to so glorious an undertaking. They would abandon home and friends to follow the fortunes of war, not for one year or two years, but for a lifetime, till every enemy of the magnanimous King was annihilated. They would be tempted to impatience, only when ordered to the rear for a rest; and, even if told to mind the baggage, and surrender

some more conspicuous employment, would in humble patience endeavor to make even this lowly task contribute in a large measure to the victory. They would be indifferent to whatever position in the army offered an opportunity for hard work.

Your priests and religious, men and women consecrated by vow to lives of sacrifice, heard this call of the Lord Christ, when youth made summer in their veins, and an alluring world wore a holiday aspect. In sealing their years to the exclusive service of God, they acquitted themselves of a heroism, incomparably superior to any the citizens of a republic reward with enduring monuments. As long as the priesthood lasts, as long as monks and nuns form part and parcel of our Church, no Catholic can allege as excuse for cowardice a dearth of models of courage. With no reward beyond the crown awaiting them in Heaven, these men and women fight well to the front in the Lord Christ's army. Their days and their nights are absolutely at the service of God's people. They have no time they can call their own. At every turn they must cross their sweetest inclinations. Moments wasted in outside cares and divorced from thoughts of the Kingdom, are rapine in the holocaust, and food for penitential tears. Whether they preach in the pulpit, or teach in the schools, or minister to the sick in the hospitals, strenuous absorption in God, and energetic activity for the Master characterize their entire lives. In body they move familiarly among the people, but in spirit they inhabit another world, hidden from every eye but their own, and they breathe another atmosphere, dependent on faith for its healthful reality. And priests and nuns have their imitators among the faithful. The devout everywhere assume their apostolic attributes; and, willing slaves to the same Master, are intent on the coming of the Kingdom. These men and women are prominent workers in Church societies. They are conspicuous as promoters in the League, and the Holy Name, as active members of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference, as consultors in the various sodalities. They contrive to find time in the intervals of business to pray and to practise the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Their exemplary conduct is a louder sermon than any ever yet preached, it penetrates farther, and reaches hearts cut off by unfortunate circumstances from every other source

of grace. They are a living testimony in word and deed that piety is still a vital force in human affairs, and that religion is today as potent, even if not so universal a factor, as it was in the ages of faith, those hallowed times of the Crusaders. God prosper these heroic souls, God multiply them. Work in abundance awaits their good will. The wheat is a ripe yellow, ready for the reaper's sickle. No department of society is exempt from spiritual need. And God makes merciful provision for the want. He scatters a few such toilers in society's higher circles; and, conscious of their supreme responsibility, they must be up and doing in the cause of God and virtue. Their lot is cast in comparatively barren places. Wealth, and pleasure, and luxury, grow better the thorns and thistles of sin. Set down in their environment, piety thrives only at the expense of a persistent and disheartening struggle. But all the more glory attaches to their endeavors, if the tillers of that unlovely soil make their desert bloom and blossom as the rose. The middle class of society, embracing the brain and sinew of the land, is not without its full quota of lay-apostles. Warm friends to Christ occupy commanding positions in the commercial and professional world. In point of numbers they far outweigh their religious influence. The discrepancy between actual results and manifest possibilities is due to want of assertiveness on the part of Christ's friends. They are too content to let the world go what way it will, instead of exerting every energy to make the world go what way it ought. In virtue of our calling we Catholics are Crusaders, we are live units in the army of the King; and we are not filling our posts with credit to ourselves or our faith, unless we are on the alert to lead hearts captive to Christ. That seasonable word in defense of the truth, that heroism of manly piety and honesty, that courage of conviction stamping the martyr, all these several and potent helps for the propagation of virtue and Catholicity, must be ready and familiar weapons in our hands. No neighbor must escape our influence, whether we have recourse to the spoken word, or the silent, but no less effective, example of a virtuous and holy life. Christ knows us Catholics for His sheep; and, if our lives before men were what they ought to be, the neighbor would soon recognize

us for what we are, and would be consumed with a burning desire to participate in our high prerogatives. The poor have the gospel preached to them, God sees to that. He would seem to have a special predilection for, a decided leaning towards, the world's army of unfortunates. His divine Son, when on earth, joined their ranks to lead His days in poverty; and ever since the Father exercises a special providence in their regard. They crowd our churches. No hostile influence is tugging at their hearts for possession, the licentiousness of wealth has not deafened their ears to the Spirit's whispers. High society and our middle classes are open fields for cultivation at the hands of lay-apostles, and if denied this help, they are doomed to spiritual death and darkness. We priests can preach and minister the sacraments to such as apply. And the poor are hungry for the word of God. You can enter homes barred against the priest's entrance, and you can make the beauty of the Catholic truth known where the priest's voice must be forever silent. And God has provided unsparingly for all His children, for the rich as well as the poor. He has invested you men and women of the world with a commission in His army, and has delegated you to posts in high society and middle society, we priests cannot satisfactorily fill. To this extent we depend on you in our efforts for the salvation of mankind. You are our helpers. You must widen the sphere of our influence with conquests made in the world of trade, and business, and the professions. You must fill our churches with captives rescued from the legions of error and confusion, and you must plant everywhere a longing for the truth.

Christ wins anyhow. Nothing can cheat Him of victory. He invites the coöperation and assistance of men, agreeing to consider everything dependent on their help. But, whether His soldiers fight or lie down, whether they may be many or few, He shall all the same enter the Kingdom of His Father. Whatever station He assigns us in the battle, let us be content, and work away with a will; let us do our utmost, and trust to Him for the rest. Ours is the grandest, the holiest enterprise imaginable. Our enemies are worthy of our steel. They have already met and vanquished stouter hearts and clearer heads than any we can boast. These enemies are the devil, the

world, our passions, our very hearts, the seat and centre of our loves. For arms we have faith and prayer, humility and patience, all the virtues resplendent in the life of our Captain and Leader. Saints are our companions in arms, men and women of too heroic a mould to limit their ambitions by any less lofty an aim than the greater glory of God, too high-souled to be content with any less lofty a flight than the aspirations of Christ, our Lord. Wear your colors. We are marching out to victory under the standard of God.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Epistle, Galatians 4; 1–7 *Gospel, St. Luke 2; 22–39*

"This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel."—ST. LUKE 2, 34.

Pathos and pity, hope and joy are wonderfully blended in this inspired line of holy Simeon. It is suggestive of a picture, well calculated to awaken serious thought, and drag a man to his knees. Three empty crosses on the crowning summit of a hill lean against the horizon. The distance between us and the vision is of that mysterious sort, which art alone can spread on canvas, vistas of which the poet catches when seated for a rest in the valleys of fancy. These crosses seem as far away as the other side of the world, where space dips to emptiness. The very barrenness of the hillside makes its top seem farther off. No stretches of grass, or shrubbery, or forest relieve the eye. No human habitation lifts its head. No bird climbs the air, no beast lends life to the scene, no man walks its steep and devious pathways, no living thing is in evidence. Death reigns everywhere. The silence of the tomb and its darkness breathe an oppressive stillness. There is no sun in the sky, no moon, no stars; and the glimmering landscape is dimly lit by an unwonted shaft of lurid flame, let down from a rift in the clouds. The heads of the three crosses are touched by this supernatural light, and all the space around wears semblance of Rome's underground cemeteries, when lit by struggling torch or taper. The Jews are gone back to the city. We are alone at the foot of the mountain, and in these surroundings we can fix our eyes on the emblem of Redemption, tasting over and over again the bitterness and the sweetness resident in Simeon's words, uttered as a prophecy years before their accomplishment; "This Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel."

Israel is the Church, the body of believers held together from Adam down to the present time. Old Israel had for citizens God's chosen people, and the methods God employed to keep His kingdom one and unbroken are part and parcel of the world's authentic history. Christ, the Messiah, was cornerstone of the Church, and from Adam on no one was saved except through faith in Him. But Christ, when He came, proved a rock of offense to the people of old Israel; and, because rejected by His own, sought and found honor with outside nations. He, therefore, constituted the Gentiles a new Israel, and established His Church anew on laws of His own making. But in the new Israel, as in the old, the test of salvation is the same, belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ. "The Child Jesus is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many." To bring this fact home to ourselves, we need but run down the ages of history. Whole nations have apostatized from this faith, and they occupy in the Providence of God a more hopeless position than the lost tribes of Israel. The sun of God's justice has set on them, and to all appearances it has set forever. Because the darkness is not complete, because their patched-up creeds possess a measure of the light of the Gospel, they are not honest searchers for the truth, and they go down to their fate eminently well satisfied with themselves and their errors. But the question can be cut down to yet narrower limits. Here in our own city the prophecy of Simeon is daily working itself out with an accuracy of detail that challenges wonder. Even here at our very door, the Child Jesus is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel. Decay of faith is as open a menace to religion as the growth of anarchy is a declaration of war against good government. Men are dashing their lives out against the rock of unbelief, and the Child, in whom they refuse to acknowledge God, is set for their fall, and as irrevocably set as He was for the Scribes and the Pharisees of old Jerusalem.

Outside of the Catholic Church today faith in the divinity of Christ is worn to a shadow. In many quarters it is grown a mere matter of taste, having long since ceased to be reckoned a moral obligation. The so-called erudition of our time is against its adoption, and pulpits in what men call churches be-

come on Sunday platforms for the advocacy of infidelity. And Jesus is jealous of His divinity. Rob Him of this prerogative, and the apple of His eye is hurt. Unsettle this stone in the edifice of religion, and the whole structure falls, to bury offenders in ruin and desolation. Add to this the small respect paid the enactments of the Gospel on every side. Moral prescriptions that the world for fifteen hundred years thought sacred are being explained away and made to subserve the interests of crime. Men are reading into the written laws of the Lord Christ interpretations that strip them of all meaning, and leave them absolutely at the mercy of their worst enemies. Barriers against vice mercifully built by the Saviour are being ruthlessly torn down, and virtue is being done to death by the minions of disorder. And the Child Simeon today holds in his arms is lawmaker to the world. He is the legislator by excellence, and He means His laws to be kept. He has the strong right arm of Omnipotence at His back for sanction. Men stand or fall by their loyalty to His commandments. There is no other test of salvation. In ancient Rome vice under its most revolting aspect was worshipped in the streets in solemn procession. Today the same vice enjoys orgies behind screens hardly thick enough to keep out the light of day, and its aspect is, if anything, even more revolting now than it was then. Men cannot with impunity run counter to God's most cherished wishes. When they rashly dare a hazardous deed of the sort, they invite disaster, and they fall as fell the nation, which for penalty of God-murder fills today the most melancholy page in all history. This Child is set for the fall of many in Israel, and violators of His holy law fall farthest and lowest, even to the pavement of hell. If punishment so condign awaits evil-doers of this last type, what fate is in store for the open and avowed enemies of Christ, for those demons of war who go wrong not from frailty, but from malice? And monsters of the sort darken the fair face of God's lovely universe. There is abroad in our land an army of unscrupulous and unprincipled abettors of evil, whose fondest dream would seem to be the destruction of God's kingdom on earth. They are employing with a pernicious activity every engine of war at their disposal. The suffrage, the schools, literature, educa-

tion, everything is diverted to their vile uses. Even sweet charity is turned to hellish account. Organization is being perfected to drag God from His throne at the head of the universe. And the Child Jesus, at rest in the arms of Simeon, contemplates as from a judgment seat the fall and destruction of His persecutors. These men are embarked in an undertaking bound to fail. They are set against Christ, the Lord's anointed; and they must fall. But passion has bandaged their eyes tight, and they quite miss their own folly. Their minds are the willing victims of moral blindness, and their hearts are as hard as their heads. They are solid proof against the invitations of truth, and they are utter strangers to emotions of love for God. They prefer the darkness because of the comfort it ministers to short-lived pleasure. Selfishness has usurped the place of gratitude in their affections, and they meet with scorn whatever advances the God of love makes. The Child Jesus is set for their fall; and, though the consequences of their sin are mysteriously hidden from all but God and the angels, these consequences are none the less terrible and sure. Earth knows no heavier calamity than to fall into the hands of an avenging God; and "vengeance is mine," saith the Lord.

To come nearer home, the household of the faith can count renegade sons, who, without abandoning themselves to all the excesses and fury of open enemies, nevertheless call down on their heads the self-same curse. These Catholics are captive in their service of God to a mercenary spirit. They court death in a mad endeavor to keep on good terms with Mammon and virtue. They try to love God without hating the world. They are engrossed with the cares of wealth, and pleasure, and honor; and flatter themselves that a resurrection awaits them. But rude shall their awakening be. A fall awaits them! And what a fall! They shall descend from the high estate of sons of God to the low level of slaves of demons, from hope and Heaven to despair and hell. Let us, therefore, pray the God of mercy to number us among His saints. Here on the threshold of the New Year, with our faces towards the three crosses on that dark and distant hill, with the example of Simeon fresh in our memories, let us take measures to get and keep among the chosen few, for whom Christ is set for

resurrection. Let us taste over and over again the sweetness hidden in that one word, and let us rise to the occasion. Resurrection is redemption, it is life forever inside the gates of God's glory. Faith in Jesus is pledge of our resurrection. "There is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." This faith invests life with a new halo, lifts men from the tomb of worldliness, and sets them down in the bracing atmosphere of God's love. Under the magic touch of faith, grace and virtue become everyday facts, and grace and virtue wear towards the dawn of Easter morning. Now is the hour ripe for resolution. Let us be men. Let us put on the armor of light, and, during the year about to open, set aside folly and fight a way to the side of our Captain, where stand the elect, souls chosen and true, for whom the Child Jesus is set for resurrection and eternal blessedness.

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR—HOLY NAME

Epistle, Acts 4; 8–12 *Gospel, St. Luke, 2, 21*

"His Name was called Jesus."
—St. Luke 2, 21.

The name of Jesus is honey to the lips and a comfort to the heart; memory of Jesus is a sweet song to the musing soul, and companionship with Jesus is the normal condition of the saints, the blessed lot of the elect. When Jesus is nigh, all goes well; and we journey towards Heaven on wings. When Jesus is absent, the way is dark; and every step we take is progress towards ruin. It is then a business of supreme importance to walk right, conscious always of God's nearer smile, never at a loss for the encouraging pressure of a hand unseen but felt. God's hand is in ours, when we leave the priest after a good confession. He is in our heart after a worthy communion, and the art of keeping Jesus is holiness. Companionship with Jesus is no mystery. It is the result of no mystifying and intricate rules of conduct. It is parent to no harassing doubt, no killing fear, no poisoned suspicion. Other friendships are cursed with these heavy ills, and other friendships are on this very account questionable blessings. Earth knows no other companionship wherein the bond of union depends on the personal endeavor of one of the two parties to the affair. Earth's friendships are too much like games of chance to be soul-satisfying. We sometimes risk all, to purchase nothing but sorrow, pain and contempt. Envy, whimsiness, fickleness may defeat our heart's purposes, no matter how honest and earnest our efforts. A word dropped by an enemy, a trivial misunderstanding may tomorrow range today's friends in the camp of my bitterest foes, or transform them into indifferent strangers. But the Lord Jesus is above these petty weaknesses of character, and He hugs tight to His

heart whatever tired son runs to His bosom for the sweetness of friendship. Suspicion is no part of His infinite knowledge, doubt never makes night in His mind; His heart is not straitened, and His love is as wide as the sea. His friends are oppressed by no uncertainty about the corner they occupy in His affections. Holiness, they know, secures them entrance, an approving conscience apprizes them of their ownership of the blessed privilege, and friendship continues unbroken till conscience announces a change of heart on the part of the owner. Other friends abandon us, when we once abandon them; but Jesus, when a break in old relations has place, waits around, as it were, for an opportunity to mend matters, and welcome the repentant home. And all the while the age-old struggle between God's love and man's unkindness goes on. Jesus is being found and lost again every day of the year. History knows only one name that can boast a universal influence, the name of Jesus. History knows only one name that appeals to all tribes and all nations, the name of the Saviour of mankind. Wherever a human heart beats, there is a subject of this King, and there at mention of this King's holy name, a hand instinctively rises, a head instinctively bows, to do honor to the King. Wherever human agony is rampant, this single whisper can soften woe. Wherever hell makes fiercest fight, this watchword can rouse drooping courage, can pour new strength into worn heroes. The name of Jesus has a history of its own; and, if all the good it wrought in the universe were gathered into one book, that book would be the faithful record of all the truly great and all the truly grand achievements of our race. Its efficacy did not begin that day after the Lord's death, when Peter said to the lame man at the Beauty-gate of the temple, "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth arise and walk." A. A. 3, 6. Its efficacy dates back to the beginning of time. Its efficacy touched the lives of our first parents; for they built, as all their sons and daughters must still build, their hopes for salvation on faith in the Lord Jesus. "There is no other name under Heaven, given to men, whereby we must be saved." A. A. 4, 12. Jesus is the Hebrew equivalent for Saviour or healer, and an angel instructed the Child's parents to so call

Him at the Circumcision, the Baptism of the Old Law. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." St. Matt. 1, 21. The title at its very bestowal cost Him drops of innocent blood and acute pain. He fulfilled all the pledges implied in its acceptance by laying down His life on the hard wood of the cross. The name was a reward dearly won. No other name in all history cost its owner such sacrifices. No other name in all history purchased for its wearer such miracles of humility, self-abasement and suffering. No other name in all history purchased for its wearer such claims to the honor, reverence and respect of men and angels. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name, which is above every name, That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth." Philip. 2, 8. Whatever our nationality, whatever our political prejudices, whatever our tastes, we are all humble followers of the God-man who bore this name, and we all look forward to that day or night, the last in our lives, when, on the point of saying farewell to every other friend, we intend to keep repeating this name, and walk out with Jesus to our destiny.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Epistle, Romans 12; 1–6 *Gospel, St. Luke 2; 42–52*

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men."—St. Luke 2, 52.

We must grow in wisdom and grace in the eyes of God and in the eyes of men; and this double growth must keep steady pace with our growth in years. Wisdom is philosophy, the key to the nature of things, the voice that makes loud clamor for order. Conduct based on order, observant of the relations in force between the units of the universe, is wisdom in flower and fruit, and the crowning glory of philosophy. To discover the eternal fitness of things, and portray it in everyday life, are the consummation of wisdom; and Heaven is their reward. The knowledge that ministers simply to the mind, with no visible influence for good on the character or will, is as empty as a game of hazard. It is the learning that first grew fashionable, when godless schools began to exist. It is what we designate purely human knowledge. It is derivable from books, and, in spite of its inferiority to divine wisdom, receives the lion's share of men's attention. It is of paramount importance while life lasts; but after death its usefulness is at an end. It can get money for the purchase of stocks, bonds, and luxuries; but it never yet produced a saint, it never yet vested anybody with the right to a seat in the Kingdom of Heaven. It ministers to men's and women's pride, and, unless kept in tight control by virtue, drags its owner down to hell. It is a necessary poison, and must be employed with due precaution. A little learning is a dangerous thing; but not so dangerous by half as much learning built on any foundation save that of faith in God and reverence for religion. This human knowledge is the basis of what we call instruction as opposed to education; and, by a strange perversion of ideas, instruction

is nowadays rated everything, education is abandoned to contempt and neglect. Colleges and universities preach the supremacy of science, and awaken in minds a zeal for progress, that would be truly commendable, were it only supplemented by a corresponding activity along higher lines. The chapels attached to our modern institutions of learning are menaces to morality, inasmuch as they are fast becoming monuments to religious indifferentism and temples of contradiction. To make attendance at religious exercises optional, is to aim a heavier blow at religion than to tear down a house of worship. To advocate doubt in the pulpit, to deliver sermons with the avowed purpose of weakening trust in the authority of God's word, is to parade as a wolf in sheep's clothing, and administer poison under cover of a healing draught. And this is what is being done the country over. Young men and young women cannot sit at the feet of today's professors without imbibing religious principles, altogether subversive of faith and morality. They cannot succeed in class, they cannot hope to win a diploma, unless they to all appearances adopt these false principles, and make their own theories, that, though quite unable to stand the test of reason, must be swallowed whole, because forsooth some infidel or atheist is sovereign king in the classroom or lecture-hall. Minds are furnished every help to pursue their investigations in the field of the sciences, the arts, and letters; but for morality and religion little or no provision is made. Obstacles to belief are set up everywhere with the permission of authority, and sowers of impiety are everywhere tolerated. The undisciplined minds of the young make early acquaintance with ethical and religious problems, able to puzzle older and better educated heads; and, as a result of the experience, go down before temptation and join the army of unbelievers. No helper is at hand to uncover error's deceits, religion is no concern of the modern university; and young men, young women, thrown on their own single resources, are no match for the pettifogging advocates of evil, who today grace the chairs of science, literature and art in our institutions of learning. God speed the day when divine knowledge shall get the hearing she deserves in every educational centre of our land! God speed the day, when men's eyes, opened at last to the light,

shall recognize the iniquity of divorcing God from wisdom and forbidding religion entrance to the class-room! Till that blessed day arrives, we Catholics must stand up for God's rights in the universe. We must see to it that the hearts of little children get quite as much attention as their heads, that for every step taken along the paths of science strides be made in the knowledge and love of God. Religion and morality must forever continue to figure prominently in the diplomas we hand our graduates, and we must persistently refuse to lower our high standard to the level of the times, and we must refuse to reckon truly educational any system which despises or neglects faith and piety. Till common justice is done us in the distribution of school-monies, we must patiently make sacrifices for the spiritual welfare of the young, and must protest vigorously against godlessness in the schools. Our homes must be made other pulpits, where on week-days the Sunday sermon will be unfolded in our conduct. We must grow ourselves, and help others by the example of a holy life to grow, in wisdom and grace with God and men. The divine lessons Jesus came down from Heaven to teach must be engraved on our memory and reproduced in our conduct. To go no farther than today's gospel, study for a moment the deep wisdom every single line of the history contains. The very motive that prompted the journey to Jerusalem, is suggestive of philosophy's first commandment, regarding our duty towards God. He is supreme Lord of the universe, and man is as much His exclusive property, as much the work of His hands, as any other creature in the wide circle of existences. Here we are face to face with a relation of primary importance, man's entire dependence on God, coupled with the serious obligation of worship. Body and mind must conspire together to fully discharge the debt entailed by this duty of worship. The mind must submit to whatever inconvenience prayer carries in its train, the body must submit to the inconvenience of journeying from home to the church, where God dwells in a special manner. And the Child Jesus, to teach us this lesson, went up every year to Jerusalem for Israel's festivals. The conduct of Mary and Joseph in this mystery is reminder of the pains Catholic fathers and mothers should take to get their boys and girls

ready for Mass on Sunday and for attendance at catechism-class. The apparent cruelty, the almost studied neglect of His parents, displayed by the Child in choosing to part company with them and tarry three days and nights in the temple, elucidate another principle of heavenly wisdom universal in its application. He taught us by this step that, when God calls, even so sacred and so consecrated a thing as filial love must yield, and be content with second place in our affections. The search instituted for the Child Jesus among His kinsfolk and acquaintance proved fruitless;—a silent, but eloquent reminder that Jesus is seldom in places, or occupations, or company congenial to human nature and indulgent to ease. He must be sought in the temple, in the desert of fasting, on the mountain of prayer, in the solitude of Nazareth, in the poverty of Bethlehem, in the darkness of Good Friday. And the magnificent spectacle afforded by this boy of twelve in close and animated discussion with these doctors of the Law, asking and answering questions with a skill beyond the reach of mere created wisdom! What an incentive the lesson contains to employ in God's service whatever talents of hand or tongue the Master has mercifully vouchsafed us! What a reproach to our lazy inactivity, to our neglect of opportunity, to our unmanly silence in the presence of evil's loud-mouthed advocates! We champions of the Lord of hosts must create opportunities for battle. We must beard the lions of iniquity in their den. Like the Child Jesus, we must courageously take our place in their midst; and God shall put wisdom into our mouths, able to cover them with confusion. And what objects of pity these greybeards are! Clad in their sacred robes of office, their minds weighted with the lore of ages, the idols of the people, these aged doctors of the Law deliberately shut their eyes to the light, and refused to see their Messiah in this boy of miracle. The miracle is entirely lost on them, and they are shining instances of how soberly true a thing Abraham in the parable said to the rich man buried in hell, and praying that a messenger be sent to his brothers on earth with a word of warning, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they will do penance. If they hear not Moses and the

prophets, neither will they believe, if one rise again from the dead." Luke 16, 29. And our modern doctors of the law, men foremost in science, conversant with whatever walks the earth, on terms of intimacy with the stars, abundantly possessed of the knowledge that puffs up and kills, cry out for miracles, all the while shutting their eyes the tighter lest they see. God hates insincerity of this sort with an eternal hate. It is that sin against the Holy Ghost, branded by no less an authority than the Lord Jesus Himself as unpardonable in this life, unpardonable in the next. The thief, the drunkard, the murderer, can still hope for mercy; but the insincere doubter can promise himself no such favor. He has simply put himself outside the reach of God's infinite pity. His chances for repentance are so slender that Jesus Christ calls them no chances at all. And Jesus Christ as God made no empty threats, Jesus Christ as God knew well what He was talking about. The doctors of the Law wondered at the miracle of wisdom displayed; and, overcome with the fatigue of wonder, pushed their investigations to no remoter conclusion. They contemptuously spurned aside a grace mercifully vouchsafed by Heaven; and some of them, no doubt, lived long enough to pay the penalty of their folly. Growth in divine wisdom is invariably attended with growth in grace. Virtue to be loved needs but to be seen; and eyes once touched by the vision of God's fairest daughter are blind to every lesser, every meaner beauty. And grace comes of virtue. Grace is virtue's wages, as well as its first cause. It is that inner and hidden quality in man, which renders him holy and beautiful in God's sight, that mark of the elect, that seal of God's love. Its presence constitutes the soul a living temple of the Holy Ghost, and makes the soul's owner a partaker in the divine nature, a brother to our elder brother, the Lord Christ. Actual grace is that series of unnumbered helps, without which we should be as unable to conquer passion as the heathen and the savage. It renews a man's heart, and enables him to love what ought to be loved, and hate what ought to be hated. It creates within us a taste for God and the things of God; fills us with a disgust for sin and for the pleasures common to reprobates and the beasts of the field. It makes us strong

enough to avoid even those venial sins and imperfections, which seem almost native and necessary to our present condition. It makes us one with Jesus Christ. Here then is the wisdom God would have us learn, here is the grace in which God would have us grow. And this growth must be manifest not to men alone, but to God also. It must influence the thought as well as the outward deed. It must be clean-hearted, as well as clean-handed. We are Catholics, not Pharisees; and holiness with us is not measured by any so unfair a standard as the opinion of men. Had Christ constituted mere outward appearances sanctity, the Pharisees would have been the first to hail Him for Leader. But Christ did no such thing. He scourged with all His eloquence the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and taught the world that mere outward decency can be coupled with the most hideous crimes, and that in the last resort a man's heart is the arbiter of His destiny.

One of the sweetest lessons in the whole story of Christmas is again hinted at in today's gospel. We are reminded that the Saviour, whose birthday we are fresh from keeping, was a child like other children, and grew, and waxed strong in wisdom. But the words just read breathe a something sterner than any mere sentiment of tenderness or childlike love lingering around the crib at Bethlehem. They beat on our ears like a call to arms, like a ringing summons to be up and doing in the cause of the new-born Christ. If the grace of God was in our Infant Leader from His very conception, it is our bounden duty as soldiers of the King to see to it that our souls are made resplendent with this first requisite for a place in His ranks. The Infant Jesus solicits the service of none but such as are clean of heart and equipped with grace. This grace of God is so subtle a thing, a thing so far removed from sense, that no one can with any degree of certainty detect its presence in himself or others. No man knows whether he is worthy of God's love or of God's hatred; and everybody knows that the soul adorned with sanctifying grace is a veritable shrine of God's love. But, whether we are sensibly aware of the fact or not, we know with all the certainty resident in faith that every man, woman and child, not in actual enmity with God, are radiant with this mark of God's pleasure; and we know

with the same certainty that every man, woman and child on terms of intimacy with sin, are utter strangers to this benediction of Heaven. We know the conditions on which God gives the good gift, and we must take every precaution to keep our hearts free from the dust-motes of this world, fill them with the sweet odor of virtue, and work out our salvation in fear and trembling. The door of the confessional is always open to the weak and erring, who go down before temptation, and the priest is always seated inside ready and able to confer anew on such as duly ask the favor this blessing of believers, the grace of God; this sign and seal of God's friendship, this passport to the Kingdom of Heaven. It can be a matter of surprise to no one, just a little acquainted with human nature, that Catholics, as well as their neighbors, lapse on occasions from virtue, and stumble into ways of sin. But it certainly stirs surprise to meet with Catholics so dead to their best interests that, rather than submit to the small humiliation entailed by a sincere confession, they prefer to spend weeks, months and years in crimes that may in the end bury them forever in hell. It argues degeneracy of the basest and most dangerous kind, to have no high appreciation of this tremendous gift, divine grace. It argues a want of faith in the reality of Heaven and hell, to sacrifice the concerns of our soul to ease, health, honors or wealth. And, when once Heaven and hell take back seats in the thoughts of a Catholic, that Catholic is on the verge of disaster. For, when faith abandons the mind, and when hope abandons the heart, the soul is as dark and as full of terrors as the night, in which Judas laid violent hands on himself. Judas was a Catholic, Judas was a priest, and one of the twelve. And in an evil hour he yielded to the promptings of avarice, and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. These are terrifying thoughts, calculated to encourage everybody, not in actual friendship with God, to take good advantage of the occasion, and make the beginning of a new year the beginning of a new life; to cancel by a good confession all the debts hitherto contracted with divine justice; and, leaning on the strength of God's grace, resolve to let no long interval of the coming year pass without confession and communion.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

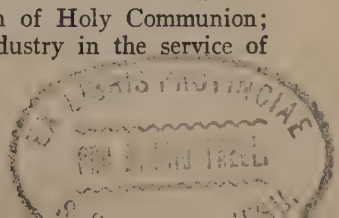
Epistle, Romans 12; 6–16 *Gospel, St. John 2; 1–12*

"There was a marriage in Cana."
—St. John 2, 1.

The public ministry of the Lord Christ opens with a wedding, and God stamps marriage with a most stupendous miracle for seal of His approval. Small wonder that His true Church holds marriage in high esteem. The Catholic Church easily surpasses all the sects in its reverence for marriage. With us marriage is sacred, it is a sacrament, and it must be received in a state of grace. The state of grace is as necessary before marriage as it is before Holy Communion; and ordinarily speaking, confession is the one plank thrown mariners shipwrecked after Baptism. Our Church is steadily set against divorce, and God alone can sunder marriage by the death of husband or wife. Civil courts have no jurisdiction whatever over this sacrament, and the whole question is reserved to the Church of God. Marriage, therefore, is the conspicuous topic in this morning's lesson. By way of prelude to the main business in hand, let me call your attention to the stupendous miracle worked on this occasion, the change of water into wine. And first I would remark that this surpassing wonder was a son's answer to a mother's prayer. Jesus at Cana changed water into wine at the request of His Virgin Mother Mary. Tender pity for the bride and bridegroom, solicitude for their hurt feelings, induced the Mother of God to lay their wants before her divine Son. And this same Mary is your mother and mine, as tender of our feelings, and as wide-awake to our wants. She forever intercedes with her divine Son in our behalf, she continually reminds Him of our needs. "Son, they have no wine." Thought of the favor Mary enjoys with God, ought to stir confidence in her almighty power.

This mother's wish is law with her Son, and this Mother's Son is omnipotent. At word from Her He works a miracle in advance of the time He had previously set for first display of His miraculous might. The whole miracle is sweet reminder of that other change wrought at the Last Supper, and carried down the ages by the apostles and their successors in the priesthood. "This is the chalice of my blood. Do this in commemoration of me." St. Luke, 22, 20. "The conscious water saw its God and blushed," and, if Christ at Cana changed water into wine, why cannot Christ at morning Mass change wine into His adorable blood? Wine is nearer being blood than water is being wine. God made the world from nothing, He ought to be able to make blood from wine. It is easier to make something from something than it is to make something from nothing. "Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them to the brim." Notice the lesson. If we want God to hear our prayers, we must coöperate with God. Prayer is meant to supplement our weakness, not to encourage idleness or laziness. Prayer is of no avail, unless we personally do our best, and exhaust all the resources of our own native energy. Christ on this occasion works no miracle, till the servants fill the water-pots. Before giving the guests wine, He insists on their giving Him water. And then the words of the wise old butler, "Men set the best wine first, the worst wine last. Thou hast kept the good wine till now." How they contrast the economy of God and the economy of the world in their dealings with men! God and the world follow opposite courses. The world gives its best wine first, its worst wine last. The world first offers its slave the sweet wine of pleasure, money, glory, to hand its victim later on the bitter wine of remorse, despair, hell. God first offers His servants the bitter wine of patience, self-denial, pain, poverty, humility, to refresh their souls afterwards with the sweet wine of reward, virtue, peace of conscience, and unending happiness in Heaven.

Let these, then, be the lessons we carry away with us from this morning's mystery, the miracle at Cana; a childlike confidence in the Mother of God; new faith in the Blessed Sacrament and more fervor in the reception of Holy Communion; growth in the spirit of prayer and industry in the service of



God; and patience with the ills of life, remembering that the sufferings of this time are as nothing compared with the weight of glory they work unto the elect. Mary is our advocate with her divine Son, God's best gifts are hers for the asking; and, to secure her favor is to secure the favor of her Son and our brother the Lord Christ. In Holy Communion He gives us His body to eat, His blood to drink; and, with His flesh transformed into ours, with His precious blood flowing in our veins, we ought to do deeds worthy of God, and show the world by our conduct and example that the food and drink we partake of are the bread of the elect and the wine that produces virgins. Prayer was never meant to encourage laziness and idleness. To succeed at all we must supplement our prayers with labor and industry. This present life is not the time or the place for our reward, it is a period of probation; and probation means trial, probation means strife, probation means pain and tribulation. He laughs best, who laughs last. Fools laugh all through life, to weep forever in the fires of hell. Wise men weep through life, to laugh forever with the elect in Heaven and taste gladness without any admixture of sorrow. Lord, kill, cut, burn us here; but receive us into your kingdom, when life's fitful dream is over.

As before remarked, these several lessons are only prelude to the central event in this morning's gospel, "There was a marriage in Cana." Marriage is our main business in hand, and the world at large is dreadfully in need of right notions regarding marriage. To say nothing of other countries, our own republic would be a paradise of delights, crime would be less in the ascendant, and a larger measure of temporal and spiritual prosperity would be ours, if only the evils attendant on wrong notions of marriage were once eradicated. Catholic wives must be other Marys, Catholic husbands must be other Josephs; and in this event the children they raise and educate will necessarily resemble the Child Jesus. We Catholics have tight notions regarding matrimony. We are the one body of Christians in the world, with whom absolute divorce finds no favor, and meets with no suspicion of toleration. Absolute divorce, or separation of man and wife with permission to remarry, is a thing unheard of among us; and our Church

bases her doctrine on the unmistakably clear and radically undeniable authority of Scripture. Pagans always resembled animals in the matter of marriage. Marriage with them was a species of mating; and, if any difference between them and mere animals existed, the difference was always in favor of the animals. The animals at least respected instinct; pagans, respecting no law whatever, were slaves to brute passion. And the men and women outside of our Church, who indulge in the luxury of divorce, must blush when they compare themselves with the beasts of the field. From a viewpoint of decency, the beasts of the field are easily their superiors. Women married twice, thrice over during the lifetime of their first husband, are nothing short of paid mistresses flitting like gilded butterflies from one rich establishment to another. Thanks to the watchful care of Christ Himself and the guiding hand of His Holy Spirit, absolute divorce is unheard of among us; and the Catholic who attempts a thing of the kind forfeits membership in the Church. No Catholic ever yet left the wife of his first marriage to take up with another, without going over to the sons of perdition, and joining this sect or that sect of Protestantism. A divorced Catholic, when he marries another signs his own death-warrant, though sentence is executed only in the next life. And strangers to our faith are as thoroughly well aware of this fact as we are ourselves. Divorce, therefore, can never do our Church harm; the practice, as far as Catholics are concerned, can never reach the stage of remote possibility. Therefore, our whole duty towards divorce consists in frowning it down everywhere, in raising our voice on all occasions against its iniquity, and visiting on the heads of its perpetrators the ignominy and the contempt they deserve.

They that contemplate marriage ought to enter the state with due caution. Once the ceremony is performed at the foot of the altar, it is too late to change your mind or repent. Do all your thinking before you approach the altar. Matrimony is a sacrament, and it must be received in the state of grace. Confession before marriage is as necessary as confession before communion. To be married in the state of sin, is to commit a sacrilege, it is to reject all the graces attaching to the sacra-

ment, and invite God to curse the union with every species of calamity and disaster. Marriage at its best is not all happiness. Its joys are a little this side of Heaven, and only the grace of God derivable from the sacrament can enable man and wife to live in peace and harmony. Grace is man's chiefest stay against temptation, and the married are even more exposed to temptation than the single. The virtue of purity has claims on the married as well as on the single. Some forms of race-suicide are nothing short of murder; and, though the murderers escape the vigilance of the civil law, they cannot escape the eye of God; and the innocents they slaughter will cry out against them on the day of judgment.

Catholics should avoid mixed marriages. Our Church tolerates them, to avoid greater evils; but she at the same time does everything in her power to discourage them. Our Church has the experience of nineteen centuries at her back; and, when she legislates against mixed marriages, this single circumstance ought to be reason enough for their avoidance. While there may be some honorable exceptions, I personally have small respect for the Catholic who marries a Protestant. Such Catholics are to my mind speckled Catholics, and their neighbors can, without harm to the eighth commandment, entertain suspicions and doubts concerning the quality of their Catholicity. Above all, Catholics must pray hard and meditate long before choosing a life partner. Marry from whim, and leave the rest to the divorce court, is somewhere described as the New York way. It is not the Catholic way; and, when once a Catholic marries trouble, trouble is his portion till he dies, and after. In the words of a celebrated humorist, marriage with Catholics is a life sentence, and the only divorce a Catholic can hope for is handed him when he rides to the cemetery in a hearse.

Marriage is a lottery, wherein some draw prizes, and some draw blanks. The lucky ones must be in the majority, since a multitude of otherwise sensible persons daily take the risk, and marriage itself, which is as old as the world, threatens to continue a permanent institution. Small need to recount the discomforts attaching to marriage. They once induced a certain writer to compose a book, entitled, "How to be Happy, though Married." They led the great Fenelon to describe mar-

riage as, "a state of tribulation painful in the extreme, for which he who thinks himself called to it, must make ready in a spirit of penance."

But marriage after all is an institution of God, and a sacrament; and religion can throw round it a halo, able to make it a thing of surpassing beauty. All its evils are but accidents. They are not inseparably interwoven with marriage. They all take rise in a mistaken notion of things, and first put in an appearance, when the grace of God abandons the heart of man, or wife, or both. The sacrament, when worthily received and approached with the proper dispositions, can store two souls with a measure of heavenly strength, abundantly able to tide them over all the troubles and trials attached to their state in life. Everyday experience is standing proof that the dangers of marriage need frighten no man or woman of ordinary trust and courage.

Due caution in the choice of a partner and strict compliance with your Church's wishes would seem to be the two essential requisites for a happy and a holy marriage. Without making the rule an inviolable law, the Catholic Church wants all her children to solemnize their marriage at the foot of the altar, in full view of Calvary's august victim, with a benediction from the priest actually engaged in the performance of the sacred mysteries. This Nuptial Blessing can never be given outside of Mass, and our Catholic legislation on this point is only another silent protest against the evil of mixed marriages. And a mixed marriage is at best a melancholy affair. It must be performed somewhere outside the sacred precincts of the sanctuary, and the Catholic party is barred sight of the altar. The priest of God stands by more in the capacity of a mourner than a herald of gladness, more in the capacity of an officer of the law than a father. He is there to safeguard the interests of the Catholic and of the children to be born. No surplice, no stole, no lights, no incense, no holy water. First, a hard and fast contract regarding the Catholic education of the children is drawn up and signed, mutual promises are given and taken, the ring is slipped on the bride's finger, and without any blessing of God the ceremony is over.

Catholic young women, have a care for your future. Scorn

to link yourselves to perpetual danger. When your Church legislates against mixed marriages, when she openly disapproves of them, this single circumstance is argument enough for their avoidance. Marriage is the crowning act of manhood, the crowning act of womanhood; and it must be entered into with care. It is the open door to happiness, the highest this earth knows; but, like every other joy this side of Heaven, wedded bliss is mixed with sorrow. Before a year runs round, the radiant smiles of marriage-morning may be dashed with tears. Religion herself cannot stay these tears, but she can sweeten them; and remembrance of what transpired at the foot of the altar, remembrance of the blessings invoked during Nuptial Mass, can dry wet eyes, and loosen what strings of sorrow straiten an oppressed heart. In the Tyrolese mountains, where Catholicity prevails, the mother on marriage-morning presents her daughter with a beautifully worked handkerchief to dry the tears of married life, and after death rest as a face-cloth on her face. Marriage is not all joy. Marriage is always a little less than Heaven; and it is folly to take up the duties of marriage without God's fullest blessing.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Epistle, Romans 12; 16–21 *Gospel, St. Matthew 8; 1–13*

"Only say the word and my servant shall be healed.
I have not found so great faith in Israel."
—St. Matthew 8, 8.

You will detect in the Centurion's conversion a series of graded steps that invariably has place in every well ordered change of heart. "Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented." Charity is the first of these steps. It is attended by a sense of individual helplessness as against misfortune, over which human agencies have no control. This centurion was, no doubt, an honest man, born of heathen parents, and reared in the gloom of heathendom, that God's own grace illumined at intervals, without wholly dissipating. For God does not abandon even the heathen, and God owes it to His justice and goodness to make salvation a possibility for even those of His children, who by the accident of birth are condemned to live and die in the grossest kind of barbarism. These unfortunates can feed the little light vouchsafed, by uniformly hearkening to the whispers of conscience, and acquitting themselves well of what duties the natural law unerringly and unmistakably imposes. Uppermost among these duties is that of the golden rule of charity, supplemented by humility, a sense of human nothingness in the presence of the Deity. After a long probation in the apprenticeship of natural virtue, God in no uncertain terms speaks to the heart, and the glimmer of natural uprightness bursts into the full light of supernatural faith.

These are steps in the ladder to God that no man can misplace or invert. These are the divinely appointed stations along the road leading from error to truth, from darkness to light, from the baneful atmosphere of heathenism and heresy to the balm-freighted air of Christianity and Catholicity. And

this process is the same for every unfortunate, wandering, whether through choice or accident, outside of the Catholic Church, the one true fold of Christ. Every such soul, whether it animates the body of an untutored Indian in the wild Northwest, or an uncivilized savage at home in the jungle, or a modern heretic high in the scale of literary merit; every such soul must, if it will be saved, plod its weary way through the same process and undergo the same probation. And the reason why only a few, a very few, indeed, of these unfortunates emerge from the darkness into the light is not far to seek. Error flatters the senses and tightens the bonds of slavery, while its victim sleeps. Light invests life with new responsibilities, from which nature shrinks. Some sin of unkindness towards God, or self, or the neighbor, is unatoned for. The gayeties of this world crowd the joys of Heaven into the background. God's supremacy is made light of, because it does not walk the streets to deal out speedy justice or make the lightnings winged messengers of its anger. And the end? Well, the end of such souls is always the same. It is the end of Dives, the pitiful wretch in Gospel history who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day. It is exterior darkness, where there are weeping and gnashing of teeth. It is burial in hell, where the tongue will be parched, and no friend will be nigh to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool that tongue and allay the heat of that tormenting flame. But our centurion cast his lot with no such class. He began at the beginning, and nobly fought his way to the end of the journey. He must have been an eminently kind and charitable man. For, high as he ranked in the army of imperial Cæsar, he did not disdain to openly approach the despised Saviour. He scorned the ridicule of his fellows, not in behalf of himself, or a son, a wife or a daughter, but in behalf of a servant, who lay at home sick of the palsy. Kindness done a superior can sometimes be suspected of insincerity, and sometimes proves to be ill-disguised and sordid self-love. But the kindness of the centurion admits of no such suspicions. It was prompted by some higher and holier motive; and, all natural though it was, it somewhat contributed to winning for its possessor the surpassing gift of profound humility and burning faith.

"Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy. I will come and heal him. Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof!" This is humility! This is a description of humility that goes straight to the heart, and fills the mind more completely than any definition of the virtue procurable in books. Why, it is humility in the concrete; humility breathing with the breath of life. God in the language of Holy Scripture finds it easy, and considers it a duty, to resist the proud; but to the humble He surrenders, to the humble He opens wide the treasuries of His grace. And so the centurion without a change of breath passes from his expression of humility to an open and grand avowal of faith in the divinity of the Messiah, Christ, "Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel." Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ during the brief period of His career on earth tasted all the ills and all the sorrows to which human flesh is heir. His soul was so overwhelmed with grief in the garden of Olives that sweat drops of blood bedewed the ground about, and His dead body at rest in the arms of His Mother was covered with gaping wounds and livid bruises. Every magnificent trait of His magnificent nature was done rude violence to by enemies, whose love He coveted, for whose eternal welfare He was living and toiling, for whose salvation He would one day suffer and die. Every bone and fibre in His sacred body, susceptible of pain, smarted under blows aimed and weighted by a species of ingratitude that surpasses conception.

We are of so delicate a mould and so familiar with ease and comfort of body, that physical suffering is for us the acme of torture; and the quivering limbs of a God, dying in torments on the cross, appeal to our sympathies with more vividness than any other of the infinite pains, that went to make up Christ's sacrifice. But there are deeper wounds than swords can make, and our own experience is witness that anguish of spirit is unspeakably sharper than mere bodily pangs. To such as understand and reflect a little, the agony in the garden is a far sadder spectacle than the scourging at the pillar; and the white robe of mockery that Herod's cruelty devised, hurt the Lord Christ more than the crown of thorns the Roman soldiers plaited.

And though today's Gospel reads like a triumph, and though it sings of a victory that faith won over unbelief, when a captain of imperial Cæsar surrendered to the Son of God, the accents of disappointment breathed at the close of the story are a faithful index of the one big sorrow, that straitened the tender heart of our dear Lord all through the three years of His public life. He was come, after four thousand years of patient waiting and prayerful sighs, to be Israel's Messiah. He was come to band together God's chosen people for a journey far more sublime and momentous than that people's march under the leadership of Moses from Egypt to the Land of Promise. He was come to build a kingdom on the ruins of hearts, that still beat high with hope amid all the buffets of God's chastening Providence, that still knew themselves heirs to the rich and solemn promises made Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was come in the lowly garb of a man like themselves. He performed prodigies that no man ever before or since performed. He delivered Himself of wisdom that could not and cannot be acquired in the schools. He engaged in familiar converse with Israelites of every rank and condition. He blessed their children. He stroked their children's foreheads, and told their wondering mothers that their babes were the images and types of angels in Heaven. In fine, He used every device that prudence, human or divine, could suggest to win the faith, the love and devotion of Israel's people. And all this, to what purpose? Why, you are yourselves acquainted with the melancholy facts. They are a matter of well attested history. His miracles won for Him nothing but the scorn of unbelief. His kindness won for Him nothing but the deepest, sort of hate. His zeal won for Him nothing but contempt, death in abandonment, ignominy and shame.

Here is a picture of disappointment unequalled in the annals of mankind, and here is a sorrow that more than once plucked tears from the eyes of God. "For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it. And if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would have perhaps hidden myself from him. But thou, a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats with me; in the house of God we walked with consent. . . ."

Ps. 54, 13. Do you notice that the thought is incomplete? Ah, well, the ingratitude of God's friends is so astounding a fact, so limitless a mystery, that God Himself stops short and lapses into silence when confronted with it. "And they shall say to Him, What are these wounds in the midst of thy hands? And He shall say, With these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me." Zach. 13, 6. Again, that week before the Passion, when all the prophecies were being fulfilled, Christ looks down from a height just outside the ill-fated city of His blind and ungrateful people, and gathers up the laments of David and Zacharias in these touching words, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not?" St. Matthew 23, 37.

This thought of Israel's unkindness and disloyalty kept continually harassing the Saviour's heart, and saddened many an incident that would have otherwise been supremely consoling. With this fact in mind we can readily understand with what a look of tender pity Jesus Christ looked out over the multitude, over the children of the Kingdom, and with what emotion He touched again the theme nearest His Sacred Heart, the ingratitude of His friends, the ingratitude of Israel in particular, "Amen, I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven: but the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Matthew 8, 10.

We Catholics occupy in the present economy of God's Providence a position exactly similar to that occupied by the Jews of our Lord's time. We are, as they were, God's chosen people; and, under the obedience of God's vicar and representative, the Pope, we are children of the kingdom, that Christ came to build on the earth. We are bound to the service of God by ties more sacred and more solemn than were any of the temporal favors accorded the Israelites, wandering in the desert. Since Christ's death on the Cross sealed the laborious life of thirty-three years, that purchased for us our redemption, we are under obligations that the Jews could be excused for

forgetting. God has peculiarly urgent claims to our service, and it would be long to enumerate even a few of the most striking. And yet some members of the Catholic Church, recreant to the voice of their Mother, putting arguments into the mouths of her enemies, and covering over with shame the memories of their fathers in the faith, are walking ways that lead to exterior darkness and eternal ruin. Men for whom God has done so much forget their benefactor, and practically lead worse lives than neighbors to whom Heaven persistently denies the inestimable privilege of belonging to the true faith. This is, indeed, a sad topic; and yet, like every kindred reflection, it contains a lesson that can hardly be too much insisted upon.

Mere membership in the Catholic Church, without an honest endeavor to live up to the requirements and recommendations of that Church, cannot save. At the day of judgment it will little avail a condemned soul to plead membership in Christ's Church for reversal of sentence. The grander the cause and the more splendid the favors of the Captain, the blacker the infamy of cowardice and treason. Disloyalty to God's cause puts on new degradation, when found in soldiers as richly endowed by Heaven as Catholics. And the sacred character of Baptism becomes in the place of torments a badge of peculiar shame and pain. Nevertheless, a spark of comfort and a gleam of hope can be derived from the thought that membership in the Catholic Church, though not all the work of salvation, is still as important a half of the work as honest endeavor to live up to the requirements and recommendations of the Church.

Hold fast then to the faith of your fathers! Forever identify your interests with those of the Church! And, though naked of every other virtue, though weak even to faintness, though sick even to death, you are still sheep of the fold of Christ; and some day, mayhap, Almighty pity will move the shepherd to clothe your nakedness, to strengthen your weakness, to cure your sickness. Pray the Lord Christ, by the memory of His bitter Passion, to breathe into you the spirit of the great-souled centurion, and thus enable you to prove yourselves at last men of genuine charity, men of saving humility, men of steadfast faith that works, and watches, and waits.

With bleeding feet, sweet Lord, you sought
  Through matted briars this wayward sheep.
  Your heart's blood purpled Calvary's steep;
Let not such labor go for naught.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Epistle, Romans 13; 8–11 *Gospel, St. Matt. 8; 23–28*

"He was asleep. What manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?"—St. Matthew 8, 27.

In brief but striking language today's gospel pictures forth the two sides of Christ's character, the human and the divine. After the labors of a busy day He seeks rest in sleep. He is, therefore, a man. When awakened by His terror-stricken disciples, He authoritatively orders the winds and the waves to be still. He is, therefore, God; and no god of a diminished size, like that Alexander of old who sighed at the earth's confines for new worlds to conquer, and in the end was content with a coffin; or that Xerxes, whom the poet Juvenal represents at one time whipping the winds with a lash to make them change their course, and blow what way he wanted, at another hurling lengths of chain into the sea to bind the waves and lay a storm. And the poet laughs at the mad warrior for his folly. Xerxes could subdue nations of men to his rule, but the elements were beyond his control. Power over nature attaches to nature's maker alone; and God in Heaven, Christ on Genesareth is sole sovereign of the winds and the waves. And, then, conscious of His diginity as God, alive to the insult offered His divine Majesty by the small faith and the timidity of His disciples, He administers to them that stinging rebuke. "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" The Christ in whose cause we are enlisted, whose kingdom we are trying our weak best to spread in men's hearts, was at the same time man and God. The world of today is an enemy to this faith, because this faith is a bar to iniquity and sin. We Catholics, if true to our calling and our better instincts, stand ready to lay down our lives as witnesses, rather than desert this belief of our fathers. We believe, therefore, that Jesus Christ was a man,

subject like ourselves to the pangs of hunger, the weariness of fatigue, and the sting of heartless unkindness. He ate, He slept, He wept. And, when excessive love for us prompted Him to do so, He fasted even to faintness; He knelt, prayed and journeyed even till His eyes grew heavy; He braved the scorn and the jeers of the very people He called His own. In the desert, He fasted forty days and forty nights for our sake. In the garden of Olives, He prayed the Father's forgiveness for a world, while the tired apostles slept; and in that garden He submitted to the infinite humiliation of allowing the traitor Judas to kiss His sacred cheek.

Oh, my friends, the depth of the sufferings He endured as man for you and for me is an unfathomable abyss; and, if gratitude, the common gratitude we spontaneously display towards a child in the street, is not altogether dead in our bosoms, we ought to feel madly anxious to make a return to the Lord Christ for these favors. We know what manner of return He wants. He wants the love of our hearts, that love we lavish without stint on a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a friend. He wants a love loud with the ring of true metal. He will not be satisfied with a love that stops at mere words and empty protestations. He wants His friends to prove themselves such by honest, manly action. He wants them to set their faces, clinch their fists tight and resolve rather to die than to do Him wrong or abandon the cause of virtue. And He never leaves us long without opportunities to manifest our loyalty. He allows the devil and the world to do stout battle with His champions every hour of the day, and contend for the place in their hearts, where He and He alone should sit secure. Every hour of the day we are sorely urged to call our fondness for the Lord Christ into action, and say no to some horrid suggestion of the tempter. And often we prove heroes of a very diminished size, we play cowards; and, to escape the irksome task of self-denial, turn our backs on our only true friend Jesus, and walk hand in hand with our soul's enemy along forbidden ways. This is not love of the true sort; and, no matter what protestations of friendship he may make to the contrary, if a man insultingly slaps me in the face, or abandons me to enjoy the company of my enemy, that man is

no friend of mine, and will never induce me to believe that he is. It is, then, our plain duty to love Jesus. It is the small pittance He asks in return for the infinite pains He took to secure us redemption and a seat in Heaven. This love means work of the sternest and most stubborn sort, the work involved in carrying all day long the annoying yoke of God's law and the galling weight of self-restraint. And if we purpose to be the men we ought to be, we must begin this very day and this very hour to bend our necks to the yoke, and take up the practice of self-denial in good earnest.

To love God, is to keep His Commandments. His burden is light, His yoke is sweet. At each day's beginning and at each day's end He wants a few minutes devoted in prayer to special thought of His holy presence. The rest of the twenty-four hours He leaves at the free disposal of His servants, to use as they think fit. One day of the week, He wants consecrated to His especial honor. Mass must be heard that day, work must be dropped. Sunday is God's day. Monday and the rest of the week belong to His servants for purposes of business. There must be no cursing, perjury or swearing. Children must love, honor and obey their parents. Parents must love, cherish, guide and guard their children. There must be no murder, open or secret, of the grown man or the unborn babe; no anger, hatred or revenge. There must be no lies, slander, calumny or detraction; no drunkenness, gambling or idleness. God wants His servants to enjoy themselves, but always in such a manner that He can with dignity be present at the play. Why, the world is full of pleasures, nowise contrary to the law of God. Catholic fathers and mothers surrounded at home by the happy faces of their children, know joys that men and women of riot and debauchery never taste. Catholic friends enjoy a sweetness in company and conversation that the sinful cannot hope to find at their feasts of indecency and deviltry. But God has set a curse on certain pleasures that have a hellish attraction for sinners. He has a commandment against impurity in thought, word and deed; and He visits violations of this commandment with terrible penalties here and hereafter. There are gratifications common to man and beast, which Catholics must deny themselves. There is a filthiness which

God forbids His servants to touch. In their amusements, they must be modest and clean with the cleanliness of sons and daughters of God. He allows us, yea, He encourages us to amass what wealth we can by legitimate means. None of the Ten Commandments forbids us to become rich. One of them, however, forbids stealing, cheating and all manner of fraud. And many a man, tempted by the glitter of gold and by the luxuries gold can purchase, exchanges the service of God for the service of the devil. Honesty, with whatever burdens it brings, is the first law of God's service. Dishonesty is a trade to which demons apprentice their slaves.

This is a brief summary of the Commandments. Compliance with them in every detail of life constitutes holiness, and holiness is love of God. Fallen nature is at war with these prescriptions of the Most High, and violence to self is key to the Kingdom of Heaven. In His own lifetime on earth our Captain and Leader Christ told us what to expect. He summons His friends not to peace, but to war; war with the world, war with the flesh, war with the devil. "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I, but that it be kindled?" False systems of religion, founded by men, promise their followers exemption from restraint, do small violence to nature, pamper men's baser instincts, and strew the way to Heaven with roses of their own making. Doctrine, that professes to do away with the annoying strife, set down in the gospel as purchase-money for Heaven, will always have an army of adherents among men. Lazy rebels and lovers of ease will forever continue to form a large percentage of our race; and these by a kind of instinct stand ready to take refuge under cover of any lie, however monstrous, illogical, or degrading. Mahomet gathered and holds millions under his standard, because his system of worship canonizes sensuality, encourages ferocity, and makes Heaven the abode of uncleanness. The Catholic Church makes no such bid for the allegiance of the unholy. It stands for war against the passions, harassing self-denial, the purity of the angels. It lays a heavy cross on the shoulders of its sons and daughters; and bids them, in the language of Christ, groan beneath its weight every day of the year and every hour of the day. It has no solace for the

senses, preaches forgiveness of enemies, and advocates the supremacy of soul over body. Membership in the Catholic Church is constituted by a love of suffering, poverty and pain, and by a predilection for the annoying yoke of God's law. And God's law meets corrupt nature at every turn to cross its inclinations and grind its perverseness to the dust. It forbids impiety, revenge, dishonesty. It forbids, with hell for penalty, every indulgence of the senses, perpetrated outside of marriage. This passion was meant by an all-wise Providence for the propagation and preservation of the race, and marriage alone makes its pleasures legitimate. Even in marriage bounds are set to the enjoyment of privileges. Marital rights must never be exercised without relation to and dependence on the propagation of offspring. When the responsibilities of marriage are once assumed, they are assumed for life. Divorce is not countenanced in the Catholic Church, and whatever disagreeable features occur to mar the happiness of wedded bliss must be borne with patience to the end. The labor and pain of bearing children, the care and expense attached to their rearing and education, must be accepted as religious duties, consequent on marriage; and the hellish devices, resorted to for escape from the burden of a family, are in many cases nothing short of wilful murder, and the most disgusting type of immodesty. These and a thousand such restrictions, imposed on the license of sin, must forever operate to frighten the wicked away from the door of God's true Church. His Church is the Church of the Saints, and only the pure minded and good can find consolation and comfort within its walls. We Catholics are not ships tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We have a Church armed with credentials from on high, the ark of salvation; and, as St. Jerome graphically puts it, whoever is not in this ark of Noah shall perish in the flood. Our pilot is the Pope of Rome; and, although the pilot sleeps, though the tempest of persecution beats noise against the old boat's sides, she rides the storm secure, because the Master in Heaven is wide awake and ready, when the crisis comes, to order a great calm and bid the winds be still. And, though our Church presumes not to clear up every difficulty, she leaves us in no doubt concerning what we are to believe and to do for sal-

vation. Her doctrine is clear and fixed, admitting of absolutely no doubt, dispute or compromise. Men may from laziness, pride or selfishness refuse to enter her fold. They may find fault with the stiff rigidity of her teachings, may heap with blame her undying attitude of intolerance against error. But there she stands, just as the Lord Christ made her, the witness of the ages, her arms wide open to receive, without a single concession to the clamors of passion, whatever son or daughter of God seeks peace and salvation.

Thank God for it, faith is not all dead yet; and, as long as time lasts, the Church our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ built shall last, and within her gates shall be gathered a multitude of worshippers, men and women and children courageous enough to accept all the responsibilities of belief, and magnanimous enough to trust God for the future. We Catholics have a history, the proudest ever written. The annals of our faith are a glorious record, and we can borrow inspiration from its pages. Every walk in life has signalized itself, and our ancestors knew how to put the early history of our Church to its best uses. We Catholics have a cause, the greater glory of God, to spread His Kingdom, to scatter broadcast over the earth the fire He came to enkindle.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Epistle, Colossians 3; 12–18 *Gospel, St. Matthew, 13; 24–31*

"His enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat."
—St. Matthew 13, 25.

Hearts are the field, the seed is the word of God, rooted in good ground, grown and blossoming towards fruit. Far to left or right of the wayside, away from the rocks, away from the thorns and choking thistles, this seed gives promise of abundant harvest, and ministers comfort to the heart of the divine sower. Gaily it lifts its head to the light and, escaped from whatever dangers threaten the early hours of young plants, it hurries towards accomplishment. Apparently no adverse forces are at work to check its progress. Everything favors its ultimate growth to sturdy and stout maturity. But all the while there is an enemy in hiding, too weak yet to assert itself, but slowly gathering force in secret for future harmful influence. It is the cockle growing in silent regularity side by side with the wheat, without a distinguishing mark to reveal its identity, in outward shape and color as like the wheat as a twin blade. A foe set it in the ground, to prey on the good seed's vitality, and dispute the good seed's right to fostering moisture, soil and sunshine. Like a surly beggar it menaces the springing plant, stealing from the wheat's substance to increase its own store of poison. Hearts are the field, the seed is the word of God; the cockle is that weedy profusion of wrong and specious principles, bound to effect lodgment in every careless soul. The enemy in the parable is a wicked conspiracy of self, the world, and the devil. The owner of the field, when appealed to, stands for patient sufferance; and, from mercy to the wheat, advocates toleration of the cockle.

And now we are ready for the lesson. For our soul's profit we apply the parable to an ordinary man of the world, and

each will be able readily to discover what part of the picture fits his own case. Our hero is a plain, matter of fact citizen, a good Catholic as the term goes. He hears the word of God, and keeps it. His heart is good ground, and brings forth fruit in patience. He says his prayers, hears Mass on Sunday and at intervals during the year receives the Sacraments. He is eminently just in his dealings with the neighbor, and enjoys a wide reputation for charity, honesty and general integrity. And yet the cockle has found its way into his sowing. Whilst he slept, self, and the devil, and the world have been busy planting habits that materially interfere with his progress in holiness. Self sets the cockle of selfishness. The devil sets the cockle of greed, ambition and pleasure in his dreams and desires. The world sets the cockle of human respect in all his outward behavior. And the wheat of virtue, encompassed on all sides by these persistent thieves, has to battle for its very life. Selfishness is a disease as universal as the race, and selfishness assumes its own peculiar phase in every individual of the race. It betrays itself in spots. It is visible sometimes in a man's eyes, sometimes in his ears, sometimes in his hands, sometimes in his gait; but its securest resting place is the heart. It has a corner of the heart set apart for its own exclusive use, and it can always be found at home there. We severally know the voice of our own self-love, and we flatter ourselves that the rest of the world have never detected its whispers. And we are not far wrong. Our selfishness has a thousand ways of hiding itself from our friends. It contrives sometimes to blind ourselves to its presence. But close watch over the heart's secrets can always detect its movements. If it stirs in the senses, if it stirs in the thoughts, the motion runs right on to the heart, and the phenomenon there closes with a certain amount of noise and disturbance. Our minds suffer loss at the hands of selfishness, and are by slow degrees converted from faculties fitted to apprehend the truth into faculties altogether intent on embracing what is false. Our minds are not the helps to virtue they ought to be. There is somewhere in our minds an element for evil, a crookedness of principle, that drags us down sometimes to very low levels. Saints, I fancy, are not burdened with this load; and we should all be

saints tomorrow, could we shake it off permanently. Saints have gotten themselves into a region, where only the lamp of the sanctuary shines. They never miss the truth. They have no periods of oppressive doubt or overwhelming obscurity. Heaven has already begun for them. Even if they see God only in a glass, that glass is always polished and bright. Sometimes a man's faith is weak, or it stays too far in the background to be of assistance in an hour of need. Oh, we all have the faith, we feel ready to die for it. But its edge, perhaps, has been a little worn by contact with the casualties of life. Our faith needs renewal, the eyes of our faith need to be purged clean of the dust-motes of worldliness. We do not see God everywhere. Heaven is sometimes out of our horizon. Virtue sometimes wears rags in our thoughts, and vice parades before us in cloth of gold. We have our moments of unbelief. In fact, sin is impossible unless unbelief intervenes. Follow the argument. The will is unable to put an act bad in its entirety, to choose evil known for such. Sin viewed in the light of faith alone is a mystery, a miracle of impossibility. The will emancipated from selfishness, grounded for its morality on faith, cannot discover a shadow of good in sin. According to faith, sin is all evil, and evil as such cannot elicit a wish. What then is the conclusion? Why, this; that sin is apostasy from the faith, that we never yet offended God, without for the moment abandoning faith. And this unfaith is the cockle of selfishness fostered in myriad minds, the enemy responsible for poor results in the field of virtue. The spirit of faith is the secret of sanctity. "My just one liveth by faith," Hebr. 10, 38, is the formula adopted by St. Paul. Let us, therefore, pray God for this habit of faith. Let us beg God to save us from our worse selves, to kill within us that accursed power we have of forgetting Him and fastening our hearts on trifles. Holiness is a habit. Holiness is this habit of faith. To become saints, we must model our conduct along the lines of faith, not along the beaten track of sensuality and selfishness. We must make anew our profession of allegiance to the instincts of faith, and determine always to have a thought of faith in our plans and undertakings. With this habit of faith secured, acts of the different virtues will take care of

themselves. Charity, humility, patience, purity, piety, all the virtues, must by a kind of happy necessity flourish in the heart, dependent for its activity on faith and faith alone.

And now about these wills of ours. They are the strongholds of selfishness. But our minds are much to blame for their waywardness. The heart follows the head, particularly in the matter of evil. A wrong principle, harbored for a sufficiently long period of time, is infallibly sure to lead the affections astray. The will is blind, and leans for guidance on whatever light the mind furnishes. If this light is the tallow-dip of reason, unfettered by faith, and infected with selfishness, then the will stumbles and disaster follows. If it is that light the saints enjoy, light borrowed from the lamp of faith, then the will runs in the way to God, and success is sure. Unfaith is the thief that works havoc in the mind. Multiplicity of purpose is unfaith's helper in the will. One thing is necessary, to love and serve God. We are all agreed about that. Everything else is a matter of indifference. We are all agreed about that. Wealth, honor, pleasure have practically the same bearing on the one thing necessary. They easily accommodate themselves to use or abuse. They are helps or hindrances; and necessarily become one or the other in our hands. They are helps, only when sought or used in connection with the one thing necessary. They are hindrances, when sought or used in any other connection. When wealth, for instance, is made an independent motive, when honor is dreamed of solely for the sensation of comfort it produces, three factors at least divide our attention; and three units, two units constitute multiplicity. A hundred motives can be fused into one by a simple act of the will referring all to God's glory. Wealth, honor, pleasure are hard to fuse and melt. They flatter selfishness and stubbornly refuse to lose their identity. They are cockle of the devil's sowing, and only the sharpest kind of scrutiny and the exactest kind of care can keep them from swallowing the wheat, and killing the love of God in the heart. Religious tear them up root and branch by means of their three vows. They solemnly consecrate themselves to lives of poverty, chastity and obedience. But men and women of the world cannot well take the same summary measures.

They must have recourse to other means. They must seek wealth, honor and pleasure always with a view to God's greater glory. They must fuse and melt these three concupiscences of life into one absorbing motive, love of God. And the process has difficulties so overwhelming that few wholly and entirely compass its secrets. Wealth is cockle, only when pursuit of it tramples down God's commandments. Honor is cockle, only when it is in rebellion against the law of God. Pleasure is cockle, only when it breaks down the barriers of moderation and decency, mercifully set up by morality. All these passions can be turned into wheat by judicious cultivation, by watering them with the grace of God and keeping their leaves open to the sunshine of God's charity. Men must get money. They need it for the conveniences and comforts of life; and none of the Ten Commandments forbids us to become rich. But this desire to accumulate must not degenerate to greed or dishonesty. The man who stays away from Mass on Sunday to turn a dishonest penny, is growing cockle, not wheat. The man, who, deaf to the pleadings of charity, squeezes an honest neighbor to add to his own earnings, is growing cockle, not wheat. The man who makes gold his idol, who cuts short his prayers, to lengthen his bank account, is growing cockle, future fuel for the fires of hell or Purgatory. Men must have a care for their reputation, and none of the Ten Commandments forbids aspiration to the highest office within the gift of the people. But this ambition must not drive its slave to forgetfulness of God and Church. The man who rises to power over the prostrate forms of widows and orphans, is growing cockle, not wheat. The man who secures office by bribery, perjury and all the shady methods known to low politicians, is growing cockle, not wheat. And such men have their reward in this life. In the next, their works burn. Men must enjoy themselves. Sorrow has killed more mortals than the sword, and God loves the cheerful giver. But love of pleasure must never sink to gross animality. God has a commandment against impurity in thought, word and deed; and He visits violations of this commandment with terrible penalties here and hereafter. The hearts of the impure are scattered thick with cockle, and unholy pleasure is drying their bodies for the fires

of God's unending wrath. These, therefore, are cockle of the devil's sowing, wealth, honor, pleasure; and they must be rooted out or made to undergo a miracle of change at the hands of virtue. Poverty of spirit and scrupulous honesty must be sedulously cultivated by seekers of fortunes. Ambition must always yield place to zeal for God's glory, for the growth of His Church, and for the coming of His Kingdom of holiness into our own hearts and the hearts of others. God must be always with us on our vacations, in our amusements; and we must be clean with the cleanliness of sons and daughters of God.

The men of our time are open to another set of serious dangers, due in their origin to our peculiar surroundings. We live in a commercial age. Business with us usurps the place of religion, and a large majority of our compatriots are human machines that run all the week, and rest on Sunday only from economic motives. And the work-a-day world, when it happens on a heart with some instincts of piety left, busies itself to sow deep the cockle of religious indifference and Church-dread. Human respect is a species of inborn cowardice, that the hostile world finds ready to hand for its base purposes. This slavish subjection to the mad opinions of others in sacred matters, transcending every temporal interest, has in many instances undone the work of a Catholic education, the efforts of a youth passed in the bracing atmosphere of unhesitating and unfaltering faith. We cannot live hermits. We have to move among and do business with otherwise excellent neighbors, who profess to think this sect or that sect sufficient guarantee for salvation. And we should not be altogether men, if faith were not sometimes staggered by the experience. Religious indifferentism is the crying evil of our times, and it is sweeping multitudes towards the open sea of unbelief. To look with favor on contradictory creeds, is to have no creed at all; and no creed is the basis of unbelief. To rate one Church as good as another for purposes of salvation, is to deny the establishment of a Church by Christ; and men-established churches lead to the land of nowhere. Religion is not like politics. Parties begin and end with time. Religion is a concern of eternity, and has relations with interests as lasting as the

immortal soul. And we know men so lost to the truth that they view various churches in the light of political camps. In fact we have met men, who regarded adhesion to party more vitally important than membership in the true Church. I have in mind a man from Texas, who, when negotiating for his boy's entrance into one of our colleges, met a remark about non-interference with the boy's religious beliefs with this rejoinder: "Father, make him a Catholic, if you will; but send him back home a good Democrat." And our Catholic men must be on their guard against the entrance of any such spirit into their hearts. It is cockle of the most destructive type. It is specious, it is insidious, it is blasting. Nothing to my knowledge works more permanent and irremediable harm to virtue, piety and faith. Let this cockle once strike root, give it room and encouragement, and within a brief season every blade of wheat in your field will be dead or dying. Faith will lose its hold on your heart; prayer will be reckoned silliness and a waste of time; Sunday Mass, monthly confession, loyalty to the commandments, all the helps we Catholics consider indispensably necessary for salvation, will be scorned, despised and spurned aside. When public opinion is wrong, we must frown it down. We must be true to self, no matter what the cost. Our grand old Church never changes, and we must be equally immutable. The sturdy principles burned and branded into our youth are as true now as they were then; and we must not allow contact with the world to dim their lustre or cool their warmth.

Church-dread I should describe as an unwholesome fear of outward piety. It operates especially to keep men from the sacraments of Confession and Communion. Religious indifferentism is slavery to the unreasonable religious opinions entertained by outsiders, by strangers to the household of the faith. Church-dread is oftenest based on unwholesome respect for wrong opinions of fellow-Catholics touching piety. The devil cares not whom he makes his accomplices, enemies or friends. We Catholics are afraid of one another; and we allow the sad circumstance to work harm to our souls, and seriously interfere with the greater glory of God. There is a mistaken notion abroad among our men that piety is weakness; and men

are nothing, if not strong, robust, impetuous. There is no denying the fact that piety sits awkwardly on men, though it adds a borrowed dignity to women. This notion somewhat accounts for the indifference displayed by men towards Holy Communion. The women, God bless them, old and young, are with rare exceptions doing God's will in this matter of frequent communion and are gloriously seconding the efforts of the Sacred Heart to establish a Kingdom in the world. But the men hold back, the men are recreant to duty in this one particular. Is it the result of that old prejudice turning on the reputed identity of piety and weakness? Perhaps. Besides, men are the born toilers of the race, engrossed with business, driven daily to the pit of commerce and trade to do battle with problems that monopolize their energies, embarrass their thoughts, and estrange them from God. A sense of unworthiness is engendered by these minor faults, and men by slow degrees reckon themselves unfit for frequent communion, unworthy to approach often the God of holiness. Men, correct these mistakes. Never in your lives were you farther from the truth. Piety is not weakness. Heroes like Columbus, O'Connell, Windthorst, give the lie to every such sentiment. They relied more on the Bread of the Strong than on their skill and eloquence. You were not created by God Almighty merely to do business, and discharge the functions of a human machine. Even if you are less worthy of the divine favor than your mothers, sisters, wives and daughters, in letting long intervals elapse between communion and communion, far from rendering yourselves worthier of the gift, you are withdrawing yourselves from the source of spiritual strength, you are dying spiritually by inches. Go often to communion. If you want to put on the omnipotence of God, if you want to carry your souls safely through the dangers that beset you outside the sanctity of your homes, let no month, let no week pass without strengthening yourselves at the Holy Table, without partaking of this bread of the elect, this wine that produces virgins.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Epistle, Thessalonians 1; 2–10 *Gospel, St. Matthew 13; 31–36*

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man sowed in his field."—ST. MATTHEW 13, 31.

This thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel is a wonderful composition. It is almost entirely taken up with a trilogy of parables on the word of God, viewed under the aspect of seed-sowing. The first of the three describes in detail the kinds of ground, the variety of hearts, on which the seed falls. It divides the world of men, considered as hearers of the word, into four distinct classes. Some hearts are the wayside, some are rocks, some are land choked thick with briars and thorns, and some are fertile fields with varying degrees of richness. In some hearts the word of God never strikes root at all; in others it strikes root, but soon withers and dies; in others again it strikes root, grows, but never reaches the full maturity of blossom and fruit. The second of the three parables, dismissing wayside hearts, and hearts of rock, and hearts suffocated with rank growth, takes up hearts blessed with fruitfulness. It introduces the cockle spread by an enemy, and hints at what loss the elect sustain by contact with worldliness and sin. The seed in this second parable is hampered by its close proximity to the cockle; and is engaged in an unequal struggle with its stouter adversary for sun and moisture. Seed of this sort is seed sown in hearts not yet in perfect accord with the will of God. They are worldly hearts, condemned to trade and barter with men of sin, and content with their lot; condemned to move familiarly among God's enemies, and satisfied with the company they keep. They are hearts, that never rise to the serener heights of holiness, but go on plodding their toilsome way past dangers a small measure of generosity could remove

from their path. They bear fruit; some, twenty; some, thirty; some, fifty fold; but never come quite up to the husbandman's expectations. They reach home, they attain Heaven; but only at the expense of needless pain, and covered with self-inflicted wounds. Christ's hearers must have been thoroughly alarmed by the awful threats of final ruin contained in these first two parables. To raise their drooping courage, our God of hope leads in the mustard seed, the burden of today's message. "The Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which when it is grown up becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and dwell in the branches thereof." The tree with the birds of the air nestling in its branches is the last step in the process; and the seed, escaped from the manifold curses of the wayside, of the rocks, of the thorns, and thistles, and cockle, reaches maturity, secure against the storm, and sound from base to summit. Small need to point out the details from start to finish, from seedling to tree. And yet good may come of the thing. Some heart in the multitude may wake up to the treasure it possesses in God's word, and turn the knowledge to better account. This seed, to assume the lofty proportions of a tree, must first be sown deep down in the field of a man's heart. It must enter, as it were, into a tomb, hide away for a space from the light, and crumble past recognition. "Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." St. John 12, 25. To live to God, is to die to self and the world.

"Fools live, to die! The seed and we,
To live to-morrow's eternity,
Die to-day!"

And this in brief is the hard lesson of the cross. To perverse and stubborn nature it is a seeming paradox. The lives of Christ and His saints are a key to the mystery. Like the seed destined to grow, we must, to achieve holiness, be buried in the ground of contempt, oblivion and obscurity; we must hide away from the light of garish day; we must in the grinding process of tribulation crumble and moulder past recognition. Otherwise we bring forth no fruit in the Kingdom of God.

No matter how rich we are in this world's goods, we must be poor in spirit. We must cultivate detachment from everything that makes wealth desirable. There must be no place for sinful ease in our lives, no place for enervating luxury. We must be poor men and put on the ways of poor men, even if obliged by our station in life to wear the raiment of kings, and play the part of leaders in society. And we can learn lessons of priceless worth for our souls from the conduct and behavior of the poor. The poor are ashamed of their lot, and deem themselves unworthy of anybody's notice. They experience sore discomfort, when honored, and reckon themselves made sport of and mocked. They are ill at ease, when dragged into public notice, and would much prefer escape. They are conscious all day long of their degradation, and shrink from passers-by. And how many of our faults are rooted somewhere in a mad effort to win the notice, the esteem, and the affection of others? Men are often emboldened to do wrong by the good opinion others have of them. Men often take liberties they would deny themselves, if not firmly planted in this or that person's good will and friendship. We have a law, and according to that law we must die. We must be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, not merely in this or that particular, but to the root, thoroughly, completely. Our minds, our hearts, our aspirations, must be made altogether different from the minds, the hearts, the aspirations we had when children. Our minds must be fastened on God and His glory. Our hearts must be fastened on God, and content with His love. Our aspirations must be pointed Heavenward, and on the alert for the growth and spread of God's Kingdom. Far from harboring a murmur of complaint, we must have no quarrel with God's discerning Providence, but lovingly kiss the Father's hand that smites to save. Far from uneasily looking to right and left for an avenue of escape from the shafts and arrows of misfortune, we must welcome them as trophies of divine favor, as additions to our treasury of merit. Far from surrendering energy to impatience and despondency, the sure forerunners of idleness in the service of God, we must go out to meet our sorrows with the set face of determined and exultant courage. To cower and lose heart in the presence of difficulty, is to fail.

We must not give the enemy time and leisure to marshal his forces together for an overwhelming attack on our peace of mind and contentment. We must be beforehand with trouble. It is half the victory over tribulation to meet calamity with a bold front; and the strain of work is a panacea for the manifold ills of life. Because of this tension, soldiers, pugilists, athletes, forget their pains and quite miss the smart of wounds encountered in the heat of action. Anxiety never yet shielded a man from crosses fashioned by Providence for his shoulders; but high spirited courage has on many an occasion robbed them of all their weight of pain, and made them even welcome. The coward undergoes the double crucifixion of terror and torment. The brave man, superior to terror, knows only the lesser pang of alleviated torment.

This process of suffering cannot be dispensed with in the spiritual life. It is as much needed for progress in holiness as the seed's destruction for development into a towering tree. To live to God, we must die to self and the world. The heart untouched by sorrow has no large part with Christ in agony, and they that know grow uneasy, when life is one long holiday. "To suffer, or die," was St. Teresa's prayer, and she well understood how empty of merit are our days, when pain is absent. Fire renders gold the purer, it consumes the baser metals, and reduces stubble to vapory ashes. Saints emerge from tribulation renewed in limb, like Daniel's companions in Babylon's furnace. Dan. 3. Sinners cannot stand this supremest test, and their works of straw go up in smoke. This present hour is a period of probation, the season of fruition is deferred till after death. God never meant this valley of tears to be a place of reward for His friends. Its joys are barely commensurate with the little good done by God's enemies, and hardly repay them for their deeds of natural virtue, their charity mixed with pride, their politic honesty, their hypocritical piety, their utilitarian sobriety and cleanness. In the eyes of men of God prosperity is a dubious blessing, a sure provocative of unease. It awakens well-founded suspicions that all is not right within, that God's anger is imminent and near. St. Ignatius, when invited by Heaven to ask a favor, made prayer that his Society of Jesus might never in all its history be without

persecution; and, basing our opinion on his conduct, we venture to think that failure here is securest pledge of future and unending triumph in Heaven. Lift up your heads, ye men and women bowed down with grief, sturdily set your faces against defeat. Though the world holds us losers, we are winners; and our crowns await us on the other side of the grave. "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors. These seeing it shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation. Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, 'These are they whom we had some time in derision and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints. What hath pride profited us? Or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on. And as a ship that passeth through the waves; whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters.' Such things as these the sinners said in hell: For the hope of the wicked is as dust, which is blown away with the wind, and as the remembrance of a guest of one day, that passeth by. But the just shall live forevermore; and their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. Therefore shall they receive a Kingdom of glory and a crown of beauty at the hand of the Lord; for with His right hand He will cover them, and with His holy arm He will defend them." Wisdom 5. When the air is heavy with disaster, God is high. The disciples learned the lesson that wild night on Genesareth, when death by drowning stared them in the face. In the morning they saw Jesus on the shore. God is nearest, when things go worst. Dawn unfailingly follows the darkest hour of night. With all these precautions, with death to self and the world, with poverty of spirit, with love of sacrifice and pain, with giant courage in the face of disaster, the growth of the mustard-seed of virtue is assured. A heart thus fortified cannot fail of abundant fruit; and the tree prospers, its topmost summit reaching towards the sky, its

sturdy branches a secure home for the winged inhabitants of the air. Such seed is the word of God planted deep down in the heart of a saint, entered, as it were, into a tomb, hidden away for a space from the light, and crumbled past recognition.

In the case of St. Francis Xavier, in the case of St. Francis Assisi, in the case of saints too numerous to mention, this seed was a single word of Holy Scripture, meditated and pondered till it effected lodgment in the ground of the saint's heart, till it towered into the air, a colossal tree, able to overshadow the world. "Francis Xavier, what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" St. Matthew, 16, 26. "Francis of Assisi, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor." St. Matthew 19, 21. These two thoughts were the mustard-seed, and these two thoughts were centuries ago responsible for two heroes of zeal and holiness, whose fame can never die. But study out the still and silent process by which the change was effected. The one and the other were men of the world, with ambitions like ours, with passions as strong for evil, with wills as weak in good. What we call chance whispered the word into their ears. They took it, and sowed it in their field; and it grew, and grew, and grew. Each succeeding year marked a new addition to its growth, and when they came to die, they were but a short journey from God. Are we minded to follow their example? The thing is in our power. We have but to yield once and with generosity to the spirit of God. We have but to allow God's word to sink deep down into our hearts, escape with our treasure from the light of garish day, hide with it in the tomb of recollection, grind it to powder with the help of silence and compunction. God's grace shall prosper the work so auspiciously begun. The seed shall grow. The tree shall appear. And, raised from the low lying earth, we will live in a higher and serener atmosphere, the sacred dwelling place of angel-men and angel-women, blessed by their beneficent Maker with wings to fly near Heaven and never touch the ground. These birds in the branches are holy thoughts, whispers of grace, messengers between earth and Heaven, first words in that familiar converse with God, destined to round out the days of eternity. These thoughts never occur to men and women engrossed in

the selfish cares of business. These whispers, loud and clear in the ears of the elect, are lost on sinners; these messengers come and go among the wicked without winning the scant courtesy of respectful notice, like the parents of the Child Jesus in the streets of Bethlehem that first Christmas night. Recollection can make these holy thoughts our lasting possession. They are swarming at the gateway of our minds, and clamoring for our attention. And we beggars go on wasting our years in trifles, wearing our hearts out with anxiety, when we could be all the while entertaining ourselves with God, and tasting beforehand the sweetness of His unseen presence. Solitude of heart can build for us a cell, where, in the very centre of a busy world's distractions, we can enjoy the peace and quiet of the angels. Union of mind and heart with God in every detail of life is the normal condition of the saints, and we must resort to extraordinary means to make this union our own. It is compatible with whatever employment falls to our lot. Men and women have achieved, and are achieving holiness in every individual calling. To keep the way they walked, we need only take the precautions they took. They centred their efforts on the accomplishment of union, on the establishment of intimate relations between themselves and God. And we must ambition the same happy result. True to the Master's advice, they prayed always. And we must contrive to get into the same blessed condition. We must keep in close touch with God during the day and during the night. We must begrudge the world a thought, live off the earth, and escape to that higher atmosphere of recollection and union, the single food of consummate and enduring holiness.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Epistle, 1 Cor. 9; 24–27; 10; 1–5 *Gospel, St. Matthew 20; 1–17*

"A householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard."—ST. MATTHEW 20; 1.

With all the varied resources of divine wisdom at His service, Christ Our Lord invested His pictures of virtue with a tone of splendor and sublimity simply impossible to human artists. Language on His lips assumed powers beyond the imagining, and He drew from the most homely occurrences of every-day life lessons of the deepest religious import. Thus, in today's Gospel He likens the Kingdom of Heaven, His Church, the assemblage of all the faithful under their head the Sovereign Pontiff, to a band of laborers hired by the owner of some vast estate to work in his vineyard. Before proceeding to the real significance of the parable, let me call your attention to the inviting features this divine poet weaves into His story. It is harvest-time, the season when the hill-sides in wine-growing countries are alive with men, women and children, all busily intent on robbing grape-clusters of their juicy richness. It is the season of a softer sun, when the noisy day slopes with more rapidity to nights of slumber. It is the hour of the year, when peacefulness asserts its sway, and the departing glories of summer put off their offensively rich garments, to put on the dark red, the sad yellow, and the melancholy brown of sober autumn. It is the season, when work afield loses its oppressiveness; when toilers, under the influence of the balmy atmosphere, raise their spirits with a song, and vary their labors with good-natured merriment. It is the season which most resembles that period in a saint's life, when, after the difficulties of early youth and the sterner temptations of riper manhood, he at last stands at the threshold of eternity with well filled sheaves of wheat in his arms. "They

that sow in tears shall reap in joy; going they went and wept, casting their seeds; but coming they shall come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves." Ps. 125–5, 6, 7. In this joyous season the master of the vineyard early in the morning bends his steps towards the market-place to hire laborers. It is six o'clock, and he finds only a few of the unemployed abroad in the streets. With these few, however, he agrees for a penny a day, and sends them into his vineyard. At nine he goes forth on the same quest, finds another some, strikes the same bargain, and promises just recompense. At twelve, and at three, the same transaction is repeated. And then at five, just as the day is about to close, with only an hour of toil ahead, others, who had waited long for just such an opportunity, were ushered into the vineyard to earn their small pittance. When sunset announced the close of the day's labors, all, from the first hired even to the last, received a penny. Then arose a murmur. Those who had borne the burden of the whole day and the heats complained of the generous treatment received by the late comers, and talked of unfairness and injustice. But the master quieted the noise with a soft rebuke. Singling out one of the malcontents, he said, "Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine and go thy way. Is thy eye evil, because I am good?" With this singularly conclusive remark, with this overwhelming argument, the master of the vineyard disappears from the scene; and, as the crowd surging about Jesus waited in breathless suspense for the last word, for the moral with which He invariably closed His parables, the Lord Christ raised His omnipotent hand, and looking into the hearts of all present uttered that solemn warning, "So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen." Oh my friends, when you reflect that this Christ is a prophet, and knows what He is talking about; that He has you and me in His mind, and addresses the statement to you, and to me, and to the men of all time; can you be insensible to a certain feeling of dread and fear? So shall the last be first, and the first last. Here we sit, Catholics all of us, children of the Kingdom. All of us, perhaps, were born Catholics; all of us, perhaps, had from our tenderest years the manifold ad-

vantages centring round a Catholic home. The mother, whose face is the only dear image we brought away with us from childhood, was a good old Catholic mother, with the instincts of a martyr, ready to have any evil befall her child rather than see him in the clutches of sin; ready to endure any pain, any sacrifice, rather than see him weaken in his faith. God verily called us into His vineyard early in the morning. The sun of life had hardly risen for us, when we found ourselves in the Master's service. We were among the laborers who went to work at six o'clock. We were some of those designated in the parable as the first, and Christ said that the first shall be last. He meant, of course, that only a certain small number of the first shall be last, and even that is calamity enough. To think that Catholics, started on the road to salvation with prospects so grand and assuring as ours were, should in the end yield place in the Kingdom of Heaven to souls who began work in serious earnest as late in life as nine o'clock, twelve o'clock, three o'clock, and five o'clock. And yet everyday experience attests the fact. Don't we know neighbors who, after fifteen, thirty, forty, yea even fifty years of negligence and sin, turned at last to God with their whole hearts, and persevered in their conversion till the end? Don't we know neighbors who, after experiencing some miracle of grace, put forth more fervor in piety, charity and zeal than men we have been taught to recognize as pillars of God's Church? We do of a certainty know such neighbors, and the knowledge should spur us on to new efforts in the field of virtue. The knowledge would overwhelm us with sadness, were it not a consolation to think that, after all, the last place in the Kingdom of Heaven is itself a throne. It is no little honor to be one in an assemblage where all are kings; and in Heaven all are kings. It is supremely good to be where pain, and sickness, and sorrow are unknown; where every small heart is so full of sweetness that it would break were another measure of joy added. Had the laborers, who represent us in the parable, the laborers who went to work early in the morning, gone without their penny, ah, then there would be cause for alarm. But nothing of the sort occurred. They all received their penny, they all earned the same title to entrance into the Kingdom of God as the

late comers, so much praised by the Lord Christ. "Many are called, but few are chosen." This is a saying of Scripture hard to interpret, and interpreted to their own perdition by many of our separated brethren. The Calvinists or rigid Presbyterians make it mean that God has chosen a certain fixed number for unending happiness without any merits of their own, and has condemned the rest of mankind to perdition, no matter what efforts they make to keep out of hell. This is heresy, this is the doctrine that saps all spiritual vigor, and in the event renders presumption or despair inevitable. But the Catholic view of this text, the view approved by God's Church, is free from all objectionable consequences. It means, according to us, that God has given to all without a single exception abundant grace, abundant opportunities to embrace the gift of faith. Many or all are called. Few however are chosen. Few, in other words, take advantage of the means God puts at their disposal; few coöperate with God's grace; few do themselves the violence the Kingdom of Heaven suffers. But every soul lost walks down to hell with its eyes wide open, with the cool, unclouded consciousness of choosing its own destiny for eternal weal or eternal woe. This is the only view of the Lord's saying that commends itself to right reason, this is the only view that secures the reign of righteousness in the universe; this is the only view adopted by men brave enough to know and acknowledge their duty, and fight sin, and overcome self.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

Epistle, 2 Cor. 11; 19–33; 12; 1–10 *Gospel, St. Luke 8; 4–16*

"The Seed is the word of God."
—St. Luke 8; 11.

We are learners this morning at the feet of Christ. In today's lesson He is teacher and interpreter, and the sweetly simple method He uses fills the mind with a large sense of nearness to the art of God. Parables were the Master's ordinary vehicles of instruction, and that of the sower and seed is unique in a way. The other parables, scattered up and down the gospels, are divinely wrought narratives or stories bearing on Christian virtue. They admit of easy understanding. To read them is to understand. They need no elaborate explanation. They explain themselves. But this of the sower and the seed would seem to be a model and a guide, a key to the solution of the rest. And, therefore, the Master pauses at His story's end to let the apostles, His successors in the ministry of preaching, into the secret. Briefly, the seed is the word of God; the fowls of the air are the devil; the rocks are impiety; the thorns are wealth and pleasure. Omitting for the present the seed that fell upon good ground, Jesus separates mankind into three classes. The word of God in some hearts is seed sown by the wayside; in others, seed sown on a rock; in others again, seed sown among weeds and thorns. In some hearts the word of God never strikes root at all; in others it strikes root, but soon withers; in others again, it strikes root, grows, but never reaches the maturity of blossom and fruit.

Hearts are the field, and God is the sower; and, wherever a human heart beats, as long as the God of eternity lives, the seed shall continue to be scattered, and the parable shall go on being acted, till the angel of death lays aside his sickle, and not a blade of wheat remains to be reaped. And oh the

pathos buried in the thought, the melancholy hidden in the ugly heap of wayside hearts, and rocky hearts, and hearts of thorn, that the mercifully omnipotent sower has for harvest and wages of His pain! Remember, God has been sowing since the dawn of time. He was up and at work early in the morning. He met the father and mother of our race at the gateways of the East, and from that morning to this the work goes on. How like a God He sows! Never heeding the waste, never crushed by the ingratitude, never tired by the toil, He plants where hope has failed Him a hundred times, He buries resentment, He rises fresh to the task from the depths of discouragement and fatigue. A mere man, though the peer of history's supremest hero, would have centuries ago given over effort, and abandoned man to the death he so persistently covets. But God is other, God is other; and His perseverance is indomitable. One single force in the universe can break His courage, defeat His plans; and that force is the obstinacy of a heart dead in impenitence and sin.

And the voices He employs in heralding or sowing His word, are as multiplied and various as the resources of infinite wisdom. Everything is gathered up in the single word, grace, actual grace; that mysterious light God flashes on the mind, that measure of strength God in kindness lends the will to see the right and do it. Sometimes this grace assumes the form of a word dropped casually by a friend, at other times it is a line in a book, a glance at the tabernacle, a face we pass on the street. When other voices fail, He makes calamity His messenger. He sends disease, or accident, or ruin, the death of a parent or child, the estrangement of a friend, to fill the sleeper's ear with noise, and tear from him the acknowledgment Good Friday's earthquake wrung from the lips of the Jews. Affliction has whipped many a prodigal home, and put him on his knees again before the God he feared, when younger and holier. And visitations of the sort are extraordinary manifestations of God's providential care. In the ordinary course of human events He speaks to hearts through the agency of preachers, men set apart from the people, and consecrated the dispensers of God's mysteries. The priest in the pulpit is a sower of the word. His own heart and the hearts of his

listeners are the field, and the divine task set him is to plant deep the seed of doctrine, whispers vouchsafed by the Spirit in prayer and study, destined to take root and grow to flower and fruit in the Kingdom of God. He is a man with a commission, and speaks with all the authority God's Church can lend him. His native littleness and meanness for the moment disappear, and consciousness of his dignity as the duly accredited representative of God is his guardian angel of fearlessness and courage. God Almighty is at his back, and the eloquent Spirit of God is busy everywhere throughout his audience, unlocking hearts and driving home truths in a fashion far beyond the reach of human skill. Every sermon preached is just such a display of omnipotence, and the silent miracles wrought Sunday after Sunday in the hearts of the devout form part of the knowledge reserved for our sojourn among the angels. God has a message today for every worshipper in this edifice, and the ears that care to listen are going to hear that message in tones of thunder. God has seed to scatter, and He wants the hearts here present to receive it with all the joy, and moisture, and fostering warmth of good ground. Hitherto some have been wayside hearts, rocky hearts, and hearts choked thick with thorns. And God is watching us all with the hunger of love. He wants us to make the most of this lesson. He wants us to rise from its study, determined to shift our hearts from the wayside, and set them nearer Himself, the centre of fruitfulness. He wants us first to thoroughly appreciate the degradation and the loss attaching to spiritual dryness or impiety, and then pray down on these hearts of ours the vivifying showers of God's grace and God's love. He want us to hoe the field clear of thorns, and give the sunshine a chance.

And so, with this end in view, we follow the sower on his melancholy errand over the field. Some of the seed he scatters falls by the wayside, a path beaten hard by the feet of men, and never enters the soil to strike root. Before the sower has swung his hand a second time, the crows at his back have found and devoured the uncovered seed, and marred its chance to grow. Don't you see the picture? My men of the first class hear the word of God, and that's all. The work of conversion

is hardly begun, before an end is put to the process. In one ear, out the other, that's the expressive proverb. And the word of God never bears fruit, when it effects no lasting lodgment in the heart, when it hardly accompanies the hearer to the Church door. The devil, the counterpart of the crows in our parable, is all eyes for seed lying on the surface, and he is as quick as lightning to undo the work of grace in men's souls. A Christian's duty is not begun and ended by patiently sitting out a sermon to its close. It betokens more. It calls for sober, earnest meditation during the quiet hours at home. The seed is fallen by the wayside, food for the fowls of the air, unless the hearer turns it over and over in his mind, carries it with him to work and to recreation, and pays it the homage of an occasional word in conversation. St. John Chrysostom often paused in the midst of a sublime discourse, to urge the fathers and mothers present to repeat his words of wisdom to the children at home, and accustom their young ears to early piety. We are here to praise God. We must let slip no opportunity to spread His Kingdom in the hearts of our fellows. We must make our homes other pulpits, where on week-days the Sunday sermon is unfolded anew in our conduct and language. We must take advantage of every chance offered to strike a blow in God's service. We must keep the trumpet to our lips, to blow everywhere tidings of God's law and His mercies. And the word of God bears no such fruit in wayside hearts. They accord it a reception, that furnishes the enemy of souls with a triumph and a feast.

Further on in his work the sower plants seed on a rock. Time and the wash of a season's rains have deposited a few grains of soil in a cleft, and on these the seed make descent for food and life. They open, spread their roots in an uncertain way for support, and even give dubious presage of a harvest. But one day the summer sun breathes hotter than usual, saps whatever moisture hid in the incipient stalk, and the withering season of decay is come for that seed. It droops and dies, because the hard rock refuses it the dewy wetness its young life needed. And my men of the second class hear the word of God, receive it with joy. But that's all. The process of growth advances a step, only to be soon arrested by an

overpowering temptation, against which no adequate provision has been made. There are two distinct periods in these men's lives, that of fervor and that of tepidity; and the period of tepidity is the longer. Fervor is that time of holiday, when virtue wears its sweetest mien, and the love of God entails no sacrifice. It is the season, when man makes easy progress in the way of the saints, with wings lent him by kind Heaven. War with passion loses its grim aspect of labor, and denial of self is a honeyed sweet. And we all enjoy at intervals this good gift of God called fervor, and, when under the influence of its spell, we hear the word of God, and receive it with enthusiasm. But anon comes the period of trial, and temptation, and tepidity. God strips us of our borrowed wings and our pace is leaden heavy. This tepidity is not a sin, mortal or venial. It is a habit of venial sin, a habit of one venial sin in particular. As the name indicates, it is a state of lukewarmness, with no solid virtue, no large or small measure of generosity, and characterized oftenest by entire content with mediocrity.

Here's the process. First and foremost, our minds are for many years the victims of prejudice, the sport of passion. And our wills take harm from the misfortune. We have, perhaps, been secretly persuading ourselves that exaggeration over affects spiritual writers or preachers, when they speak of holiness as death to self, and death to the world. We know pious people, lots of them, who contrive to worry along without dying to any great extent, and we foolishly base our opinions on their conduct. We gradually train ourselves to accept for standard of action the behavior of the less fervent, and we enlist as recruits in the army of the tepid. We advise ourselves to serve God, without altogether missing little comforts, gilded moments of solace, put in our way by the world. Satisfied about the impossibility or impracticability of pure love, of all-absorbing love of God, we agree to love God with our whole heart, in such a way, however, that creatures may on occasions claim its use, and have their claims allowed. These are the beginnings. Oh we never intend at the start to leave home in search of these little comforts, these gilded moments. Nothing is further from our minds than to dethrone God, and set up idols. We are

going, as it were, to just sit still and enjoy opportunities, that force themselves upon us. God is to be master of the house, these other guests are to be transients, visitors that come and go. But what in reality happens? Why, almost before we know it, we are in thought at least running up and down the universe for distractions. God our Lord is turned out of doors, aliens usurp His throne. He has to stand outside and knock. He has to wait for a mission or some such occasion to enter and assert His supremacy anew. And that's history. That's the history of my men of the second class, the seed that fell upon a rock and withered away for want of moisture. After fervor wears away, holiness comes to have an unpleasant taste in their mouth, prayer is a stranger to their lips; and prayer is the moisture the word of God needs for growth in a soul.

Following the sower still on his journey round the field, he casts some seed in spots destined afterwards to foster a harvest of weeds and thorns. These weeds and thorns are riches and pleasure; and the saddest spectacle this earth knows is the heart that hears the word of God, and keeps it, and still allows the love of money and the love of unholy delights to choke and stunt its fuller growth. And these are my men of the third class. They know their duty, and in the main they fulfil it. But life for them is a continued struggle between virtue and sin, between God and the devil. The word of God never wholly dies in their hearts, but the whole thing ends in leaves, that no bloom or fruit ever crowns. Wealth and pleasure are the thorns, they are the little demons, that spoil a world of promise and render effort unavailing.

And these are our three classes of wayside hearts, of rocky hearts, of hearts choked tight with thorns. We ambition a place in none of these three classes. With God's grace we aspire to the enviable lot of that good ground, in which the seed sprang up, yielding fruit a hundred fold. Sweet Jesus, make us part and parcel of those friends of Thine who, in a good and very good heart, hearing the word of God keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

Epistle, 1 Cor. 13; 1–13 *Gospel, St. Luke 18; 31–34*

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem."
—St. Luke 18, 31.

The Lord's public life is fast drawing to a close. The quiet of private life at Nazareth is a thing of the past, and the shadow of the Cross is forming on Mount Calvary. Christ in today's gospel is represented gathering His twelve apostles about Him, to tell them of the dreadful events that are going to happen in Jerusalem a few weeks hence. He is going to be a captive at the mercy of His enemies. He is going to be mocked, scourged and spit upon. He is going to be put to death, and on the third day He is going to rise again triumphant from the grave. Christ knew of what weak material His apostles were made. He knew that there were many like Peter among them, men of loud voices and generous resolves, when danger was distant, but timid and mean enough even to run away, when danger drew near. And so, to steady their hearts, and stiffen their courage against the shock their faith would have to suffer, when they saw their Master bound and led away prisoner, He called His prophetic powers into play, and proved Himself still a God by describing in detail the circumstances of His bitter Passion. But, as St. Gregory remarks, these apostles were men on whom prophecies made little impression. Present, live miracles appealed more forcibly to their dull intellects than predictions, that necessarily required a long period of time for fulfilment. And, Christ, stooping to the weakness of their faith, designed straightway to work one of His most stupendous miracles, the cure of the blind man. This miracle, as far as the apostles were concerned, served its purpose in proving to them conclusively the power their Master had over the forces of nature. But to us followers of Christ

during these latter times it conveys many a lesson lost, no doubt, on them. The humility of the blind man begging on the street, his perseverance in prayer against all the opposition manifested by the thoughtless and selfish crowd, his faith, his earnestness, all are to us stirring incentives to virtue. Humility is a thing of beauty in God's sight, and prayer with humility at its back is omnipotent. God has on more occasions than one expressed His utter inability to hold out against the prayer of the humble, and in the parable of the hard judge, who refused justice to the widow, till by repeated entreaties she at last won her request, He made plain to us that perseverance in prayer, even when most tempted to leave off, is sure to carry the day with Heaven. "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." And, when the crowd rebuked the blind man for the noise he made, he only cried the louder, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And the Son of David, the man of sorrow and the man of pity, had mercy on him, and restored to him the sight he had longed for from early childhood. "Lord, that I may see!" The man's whole soul was in the prayer. His was the position of a man, who feels that he must now at last make the one supreme effort of his life. He had for years groped in darkness, that the sunshine never penetrated; and now God, omnipotent over disease, is walking the street at his side, within reach of his very hand. He stretches out his two hands, and lifts his voice, and the answer comes back, "Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole." And just here it occurs to me, that we could with profit to our souls make this prayer of the blind man our own every morning. Oh yes! with the eyes of the flesh we see right enough; but the eyes of the spirit are singularly distorted. We are wide awake enough to the rays of the sun, opening every day the gates of the heavens; but we are nevertheless poor and blind. The sun of God's love is not shining full upon us, and we oftentimes see only as far as the heathens see. Our vision seldom soars beyond this earth and the trifles that compose it. We do not rise on the wings of the eagle, and peer beyond the clouds into the home that God has prepared for us. We are spiritually blind, we are surrounded on all sides by the thick gloom of doubt and uneasiness, and we are painfully conscious of the loss of God's

blessed light. Would we, if we saw things in the light of the Sanctuary, if we saw things as God wants us to see them, barter away our birthright for the mere gratification an hour of sin affords? I think not. Would we, if we once looked squarely at the Heaven of gold streets and jeweled pavements, St. John so minutely describes, withdraw our eyes from the vision, and fix them on objects destined surely to drag us down to hell? I think not. And yet we are at periods guilty of folly like this. The fault must be in our want of vision. God has spoken. Everything is just as He represents it to be. We are men of faith, and we believe it all. Ah, yes! but our eyes are not clear. Past faults perhaps have clouded their vision, and the haze of old sins, falling upon them and crusted thick, has, perhaps, rendered them after a measure incapable of seeing virtue, and Heaven, and God's own beauty in all their proper distinctness. We must, then, with the blind man in today's gospel, sit by the roadside, and loud above all the noise about us, cry, and cry continually, "Lord, that I may see. Lord, look down from thy throne, in Heaven, touch my eyes with the magic wand of thy grace, and make me see the bitterness of sin, the emptiness of everything that ends with time! Paint in my vision so true a picture of Heaven and hell, that I may never cease sighing for the possession of the one, and striving to escape an eternity of pain in the other."

This is the eve of Lent, and we are standing with our right foot forward ready to journey with the Lord to Jerusalem. The City of Peace is a great way off, and here on the threshold of our long and dreary march we had better tighten our hold on the hand of Jesus, and borrow strength of heart from our leader's courage. With His head up and His shoulders set, He looks for all the world like a giant exulting to run His course. Behind Him flashes the record of an unbroken line of victories. In front new glory awaits Him, and at the summit the sun of Easter morning is shining full on the arms of an empty cross. But what a night of noise, and what a sea of sorrow between Him and His final triumph! He shall be delivered to the Gentiles. He shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon. He shall die in shame past concep-

tion, in torments beyond the refinement of historic cruelty. Fresh from a sweat of blood and hours of mental agony, He shall submit to the infinite humiliation of a kiss from the unhallowed lips of a countryman turned traitor, of an apostle turned devil. A Jew and Israel's Messiah, He shall be handed over by friends of His own sacred race to the rude mercy of Romans. He shall, without a twinge, face the gibes and jeers of a court, peopled by Herod's grinning demons, and shall walk in triumph past an army of wretched cowards, a mob bursting with hate and rancor. He shall bare His back to the blows and scourges plied heavy and thick by the rough fists of no holiday soldiers, and human beasts trained in camp savagery shall void their foul mouths upon His holy person. He shall die a manner of death positively forbidding surcease of pain until the thread of life snaps.

God's tender mercy hides from us slaves of fear what mishaps threaten us tomorrow. The workman, who yesterday fell from a high building in one of our large cities to groan out his life on the street, kissed his wife and children a cheery good-bye in the morning, with never a thought of the horrible fate in store for him. His widow and orphans, before the sad-eyed messenger came, looked forward with impatient joy to his accustomed return. The victims of disaster by fire and flood, yet hidden in time, are today making merry with their friends, and no ghost of future ruin dances warning in their path. We are but men, with faint hearts, with courage that melts before the far or near presence of death. And so God trims our certain knowledge to the present hour, that ignorance of tomorrow's evils may sweeten today's cup of good things. But Christ was more than man. He was God. He was superior to fear, because Lord and Master of its causes. He knew the momentary nature of pain, the utter insignificance of bodily danger, and death's powerlessness to harm. Mercy in His case needed to drop no veil between the present and the future. Infinite wisdom forbade any such interposition of mercy. And so with all the myriad woes of Passion Week gnawing at His heart, the Saviour today fearlessly announces to the thoroughly frightened apostles His determination to go up to Jerusalem,

the capital of His enemies, the lair of wolves ravening for His blood.

Nothing stayed Him in His course. Nay, the Evangelists even remark that, greedy for the final struggle, He so pushed ahead of His companions on the journey, that they found it difficult to keep the pace He set. On several occasions in His eventful career honors were thrust upon Him, and He fled. Once the people were minded to make Him king, and He escaped their hands by a miracle. Whenever human glory loomed up in the distance, He turned back and ran as from a spectre. Wherever, as today, humiliation and pain lay in wait, thither He hurried, and eagerness lent Him wings. Let me again call your attention to the fact that He whose behavior we are discussing is God, the fountain head of wisdom, as incapable of mistake as He is of sin. He is, therefore, a supremely correct judge of things; and, if He embraces contempt to spurn honor, if He welcomes pain to curse luxury, if He courts sorrow to neglect joy, why contempt, and pain, and sorrow must hide somewhere in their being a beauty that escapes our notice. The spectacles through which we see things need mending. Viewed through them, Lent is the darkest spot of all the year, a season of short meals and long prayers, a period hedged round about with prohibitions galling in the extreme to human nature, a tomb shut tight against the light borrowed by life from social functions and pleasure's merry meetings. But eyes touched by the grace of Heaven see other and more agreeable sights, they see what the Saviour saw in the incident today's gospel mentions.

"Let us go up to Jerusalem." Think not of the annoyances along the way; but think of the journey's end. Fasting pinches the body; it is meat and drink for the soul. These bodies of ours with their mad passions and beastly appetites have worked us a deal of harm during the year. On more occasions than one they have taken a mean advantage of our fondness, and lured us into tight and unholy places. We have hitherto dined, wined and feasted them, only to be robbed on the highway by their ingratitude. We have clothed them, to kill the soul with vanity. We have fed them, to cut short

the soul's supply of prayer. Are not these considerations weighty enough to arm man with an abiding mistrust and everlasting hatred of his body? Are they not proof conclusive that in crossing its wishes at every turn he is taking a holy and a sacred revenge on his worst enemy? Are they not reminders that, unless we want utterly to die, we must wheel about and fight our way back to innocence? Your bodies, my body, have whipped us to the verge of ruin. What is our plain duty? Why, we must weaken them, we must by repeated acts of self-denial teach them their proper place.

Man's body is a heritage he holds in common with the beasts of the field; his soul is a memento of the angels. Body and soul are jealous rivals for his attention. In this prison house of sin, where things material rule, where wickedness at every turn of the street spreads an alluring feast, the body has the advantage, and the soul goes hungry waiting for the dawn of a new and spiritual life. The soul is in exile here, its proper atmosphere is Heaven; and, unless we closely watch and with a firm hand repress the body's appetites, the soul will surely take harm. Man's heart is the scene of many a battle between the flesh and the spirit. Every victory won over the flesh adds new strength to the spirit. Sin is rooted in man's desire for bodily comfort and luxury of sense. We must, therefore, attack our enemy in his stronghold. We must save our immortal souls at the expense of any amount of physical pain. There is a very marked connection between the passions and robustness of body. Temperance in food and drink keeps the blood cool, and pain inflicted on the body serves at least to remind us that we have not here a lasting city, and that we are journeying towards a home, where pain and sorrow will be no more. A habit of self-inflicted pain is a most effective remedy against running counter to God's law for purposes of pleasure. And this would be true, even if God granted no special measure of grace to heroism of the sort. But the truth gathers force, when we reflect that God, who will not be outdone in generosity, rewards every single act of bodily mortification with a new supply of grace. And a new supply of grace invariably wins for the recipient a new degree of glory.

With the body tame and well in hand, we can with profit

to our souls turn our attention to the spiritual part of our being. We are by nature proud and self-willed, and Lent would not be complete without a remedy for the evil. Our Church is far from rigorous in the matter of Lenten precepts. She excuses her children from the hardships they entail for any fair reason, and she instructs her confessors to be lenient rather than severe in their application. Weak health, hard work, advanced or tender age, all operate to lift the burden of Lenten laws. But there is a sort of mortification, called interior, from which we can never consider ourselves exempt. It is a merciful provision enabling the delicate and those oppressed with labor to atone for their inability to fast. It employs itself in curbing the spirit, in breaking pride and self-will, not in breaking the body. It is in one word a habit or fixed disposition of mind whereby we are ever on the alert to cross even our most innocent inclinations. It is in some sort a remodelling of our worse selves on heroic lines.

If, therefore, we wish to become close imitators of Jesus, if we want to walk right after Him as He goes up to Jerusalem, we must first of all learn how to deny ourselves, how to put aside with a courageous refusal promptings as free from wickedness as a newly christened infant's smile. After this first lesson the cross will prove no heavy burden, and the myriad roughnesses on the path of perfection will lose much of their power to discomfort and incommode us. Let, us, therefore, go up to Jerusalem with the Lord! Let us on next Wednesday morning shake off all fear, and plunge resolutely into the work. If equal to the strain, let us embrace with ready cheerfulness the short rations and meagre fare prescribed by Lent. Every act of violence done these bodies will soon or late prove a decided advantage to the souls they enclose. On our death-beds these annually recurring periods devoted to fasting will not be sources of regret, and the ghosts of broken laws and violated precepts will not haunt our last moments. If honestly unable to bear the burden, let us seek excuse at the hands of the priest, and strive so to make up for our loss by interior self-denial, that on Easter morning we may stand without shame among more robust neighbors, with a long tally of victories over self to our credit.

Lent's great use is self-denial; and, whether we deny ourselves food, or pleasures, or innocent gratifications, Lent's purpose is accomplished, and we are in harmony with its penitential spirit. Self-denial is self-control; and, next to the grace of God, control is the one supreme requisite for progress in perfection. The art of holiness consists largely in knowing where to stop and where to begin, along with the strength of will needed to reduce this divine wisdom to effect. Holiness is prudence, a readiness to act in strict accordance with the dictates of right reason; and prudence always manifests itself in control or restraint, exerted at the advice of conscience. We never yet went wrong in the service of God, we never yet broke a rule or a Commandment without a loud shout and a warning from conscience to halt, to stop, to keep from things forbidden. Usually our wisdom, our knowledge of right and wrong, is quite up to the standard; and all the harm in the convent, as well as in the world outside, is due not to ignorance in the mind, but to weakness in the will. We regularly know our duty, we are without the strength of character needed to put our knowledge into effect, and do what we know to be the right. "Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor." Self-denial, self-control, restraint of emotions and impulses, is the one effective remedy for this disorder in the will; and Lent is full of opportunities able to test our proficiency along these lines. Every little restriction imposed on us by Lent, every little violence we voluntarily do ourselves during Lent, are golden chances to practise self-control, and practice makes perfect. Habits grow from scattered acts; the habit of control is no exception to this rule; and, with the habit of self-control in secure possession, holiness is assured, the soul's troubles are over, and Heaven is surer than the morrow's sunrise. You know how runners make ready for a race, how a basketball team makes ready for a game. The runner is looking for speed and endurance, and he finds them in practice. The basketball team is looking for agility and accuracy, and it finds them in practice. Every day for months before the race the runner is around the track a dozen times at his best speed. Every day for months ahead of the game the players are scrambling for the ball, and shooting it at the basket from

every conceivable angle. And, everything else being equal, the runner or the player most assiduous at practice is surest of success and victory. Well, holiness is a race or a game, its laurels are at the mercy of control or restraint, and every time we deny ourselves in whatever particular, we are at practice; we are circling the track or chasing the ball round the grounds.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Epistle, 2 Cor. 6; 1–11 *Gospel, St. Matt. 4; 1–12*

"Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."
—St. Matthew 4; 1.

The Church, in her selection of the gospel read at Mass each Sunday, is actuated by the desire to cull from the Evangelists lessons calculated to make her children better men and better women. These lessons are veritable flowers, that should remain fresh and fragrant in our memories throughout the week, and render our every thought, word and deed sweet-smelling gifts to God. These lessons are, besides, chosen with a fixed and definite bearing on the period of Christ's life lived over in spirit by the faithful. Each particular station of the Ecclesiastical year is adapted to the condition of mind and heart, in which the faithful should find themselves, as the year grows from Advent to Pentecost. This is the first Sunday of Lent, the opening of a series of weeks, that will close on Holy Saturday with Christ gloriously at rest in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. It is the doorway to a sad, sad valley, haunted by ghosts of fasting, and prayer, and penance. The Church stands at the doorway, and bids her children, one and all, go bravely down to the valley, and bear well in mind that there is no real Easter without its Lent; and the Master's disciples cannot hope to rise with the Master, unless they first fight valiantly, suffer cheerfully, and die in holy peace with Him.

So here we stand, with our hearts in our hands and our wills ready. Lord, give us strength to plunge headlong into the midst of our foes. Lord, harden these soft bodies of ours; kill within us all fear of pain; all mean, low-lying selfishness, born with us and waxing fat on our life. We are not without an example and a guide. Christ before us walked this valley from end to end, Christ in today's Gospel teaches us what

obstacles to expect at the very beginning of the journey. The devil, awake to the danger of losing his prey, is going to put forth every endeavor to make this new life annoying and troublesome; but, thanks to our Lord's teachings, we know his methods. Forewarned is forearmed. Them that he finds hungry he tempts to gluttony. Them that he finds possessed of some advantages of body or mind he tempts to pride. Them that he finds in the enjoyment of wealth he tempts to avarice. Now, we know ourselves just how we stand. We must watch the enemy's movements and take measures against a surprise. Are we hungry? Have we a voracious appetite or an unquenchable thirst? Well, we must watch that window. The devil is outside, alert and ready to climb; and, unless we lock things tight by fasting, he will get into our soul and make havoc there. Are we the lucky owners of qualities that mark us for leaders among men? Then, we must trim our wings and attempt no flight liable to evoke God's anger. If we must fly high, let God's glory and the spreading of His kingdom among men be our sustaining motive. Are we abundantly blessed with the goods of this world? Are we weighted down with money, and sitting in the midst of plenty? Then, we must be on our guard against inordinate greed of wealth, and shun that disease, common to the rich, of trampling under foot the laws of God and man, to add, and add to our store. We must follow in our warfare against sin the tactics of our Captain and Lord, Christ. He called the Scriptures, the inspired word of God, to His assistance, and routed the fiend from every corner of refuge. He silenced the cravings of appetite for food by recalling that beautifully true saying of the Old Testament, "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." Deut. 8, 3. He killed the stirring emotion of ambition with this other saying, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Deut. 6,16. He repressed all inclination to worship gold by the opening words of God's law, delivered to God's people on Sinai in the midst of lightning. "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." Deut. 6, 13.

The event commemorated in today's gospel happened after the Baptism in the Jordan, when a voice from Heaven pro-

claimed Him Son of God. That former occasion would seem to have been the opportune moment for beginning His public life. The surrounding multitudes were advertised of His divinity, and His career of preaching would open with a triumph. No man in that crowd could hesitate to follow, after witnessing the day's splendid miracles. But God's ways are not our ways. He who chose a stable for His birthplace, who consecrated the first thirty years of His life to the solitude of His Mother's house, preferred to inaugurate His three years of preaching along humbler lines. He retired to the desert for a long period of prayer, and solitude, and fasting. He was led by the Spirit of God into the desert, to be tempted by the spirit of evil. Personally, He had no need of these precautions; but He is setting us an example. Prayer is union of mind and heart with God, and His whole life was one long prayer. In the case of Jesus, separation of mind and heart from God was simply impossible. Solitude is hand-maid to prayer, with a charm for saints only, because it weans their thoughts from the world, and renders union with God fuller, sweeter and more lasting. Fasting is a work of atonement, a ready means to subdue the flesh, and make it the spirit's servant; and He had no sins to expiate, His flesh was in perpetual harmony with His spirit. Personally, therefore, the Lord Christ had no need of this prolonged stay in the desert. But He knew only too well what need we have of kindred precautions. Prayer with us is a labor. We are men of business, and all day long business rests like a cloud or a shadow between us and God. Fathers have to support their families, mothers have to keep the house in order. Young men and young women have to lend their parents a helping hand. And the children, God bless them, they are all intent on play and mischief, strengthening their little bodies for the years of toil ahead. Our minds are in a whirl of excitement from early morning till late at night, and we seldom find leisure to enjoy God contentedly. But Jesus in this morning's gospel wants us to retire at intervals from these distracting cares to the solitude of the desert. He wants us to make a solitude for Him in our own hearts. In this sense we must pray always. We must never be long out of God's company. Uninterrupted union with God in every

detail of life is what makes the saint; and we must get into the blessed condition. This is religion of the right kind. The religious mechanic carries thought of God with Him to the workshop. The religious work-girl, her young heart full of God, turns work into prayer; and all day long, behind desk, or counter, or in the quiet of her own home, pays God the acknowledgment which is His due. The pen of the religious poet is tipped with thoughts of God. He simply cannot keep God out of his lines. And in the golden poetry of St. Paul, whether we eat, or drink, or sleep, we do all for the glory of God. In this morning's gospel, Jesus wants us to go down on our knees often for a word or two with God in prayer. He wants us to pay frequent visits to His own august presence here on our altars; and He is going to be disappointed, if the lesson is altogether lost upon us. Fasting is an obligation of our fallen nature, it is a debt we owe Almighty God and ourselves. We have sins to expiate, and fasting is a means ready at hand to pay the debt. We have passions to conquer, and every violence we do these bodies of sin, is a distinct gain on the side of virtue. No man ever denied himself in food or drink, without receiving in return a new supply of grace; and a new supply of grace invariably means a new degree of glory. "Command that these stones be made bread." Temptation is a warfare. A soul is the kingdom at stake. The devil, the murderer of souls, is fighting on one side of the field; the soul's owner, on the other; and there is no period of truce in this campaign, no such thing as surrender. To rest, is to die; to surrender, is to perish. Compromise is out of the question. And the devil is a skilful warrior. He has the experience of ages at his back for resources; and he knows man's frame to a nicety. It is well worth our while to get into his secrets. It is half the victory to know beforehand the enemy's plans. And the devil, our enemy, attacks everybody in much the same way as he attacks the Lord Christ. He takes men as he finds them; and with three large rewards in the shape of wealth, pleasure and honor at his disposal, he bids for their allegiance. He found Christ hungry, and naturally enough approached Him first on the side of pleasure or gluttony. "Command that these stones be made bread." This scheme failing, he attempted

to break the Saviour's constancy by thoughts of pride, centred in a world's applause and esteem. His last effort turned on the world's wealth and riches.

Wealth, therefore, and honor, and pleasure are the three rewards the devil has to offer his slaves. And he has an army of men at his bidding, and to each slave in the army he promises what is most attractive. It is a good thing in the spiritual life to know that we do not all commit the same sins. Every man has his own pet passion, his predominant passion; and in some mysterious way he is a slave to its instincts, without ever harboring a desire for the objects of other passions. The world is made up of misers, libertines, and demagogues. Every heart in the world is either swayed or affected by greed, or impurity, or ambition; and, strangest of all, the misers as a rule are indifferent to pleasure and honor; the libertines are indifferent to wealth and honor; the demagogues are indifferent to pleasure and wealth. Some people abhor drunkenness, cursing, lying, as they abhor disease; but they are strangely tempted to steal, or to be unkind, or to be neglectful of religious observances. Some men have no taste for pleasures of sense. They reckon them silly and degrading. But these same men fail altogether to see the emptiness of praise, or worldly honor, or position. Others again laugh at the dignities attached to office, never lift a finger to win fame; and they are buried in the mire of indulgence and excesses. This difference between men is become part of their nature, and men cannot slip their nature. Each of us has his own trouble, and we can save ourselves lots of labor by close attention to whatever particular flaw in our character needs attention. There is a sin we have to mention every time we approach the tribunal of confession, and that one sin represents all the mischief. If we could only remove that one word from the story we have to tell the priest, our lives would soon be perfect, our sanctity would be assured. With some it is unkindness of tongue; with others, neglect of prayer; with others, unholy pleasure. You know and I know what one thing in our lives is dragging us farther and farther from Heaven. At this present hour God is telling some heart more plainly than ever before what is the cause of strained relations between itself and its Creator.

In connection with some one passion God has repeatedly before knocked at the gateway of our heart for admission, and to our shame we must acknowledge that, though we heard the knock and knew well who was knocking, we locked things tight and wounded His love by plainly telling Him that there was no room for Him inside. We were busy entertaining other guests, and we bade the Lord seek elsewhere for shelter from the night and from the cold. He wanted to come in by the door, and we hurt Him by disputing His entrance. He wanted to dislodge some pet passion, and we hugged that pet passion all the closer. And this little demon is not going to be cast out without trouble and the steady use of attention. We must settle on this one sin, most productive of trouble, and direct against it our best energies. Other sins need little attention, and we must turn all the resources of strength and care at our disposal against the one big enemy of our soul's salvation.

Here, then, are our dangers; here are the weapons of safety put by Heaven into our hands. "Man liveth not by bread alone." Oh yes, the body, the lesser half of man, thrives on bread, but the soul, the immortal half of man, thrives on other food, on every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. For words proceeding from the mouth of God are words of life, that nourish the soul unto everlasting healthfulness in the City of the Saints. "Better not tempt the Lord thy God." Hell's legions, when angels of light, dared tempt God to combat, and hell's legions have been ever since deploring their insensate folly with tears of fire. "Adore and serve the Lord alone." Set not your heart's best energies on any object as short-lived as time. God, the true, the beautiful, the eternal, is alone worthy of an immortal soul's absorbing friendship. God, who alone will live to love and help you, when all other friends are dead and powerless, claims all your heart, and God's absolute dominion over creation makes good His claim.

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Epistle, 1 Thess. 4; 1–8 *Gospel, St. Matthew, 17; 1–10*

"Lord, it is good for us to be here."
—St. Matthew, 17, 4.

This is St. Peter's proposal or bid for a period of rest. He has kept close to the Master's side all through His three weary years of labor and fatigue. He has taken more than a man's share in the privations and dangers attendant on the Lord's public ministry. And today he finds himself on Thabor's top, with the Lord Christ's face shining like the sun, and His garments white as snow. No wonder, then, that he makes the appeal he makes. He would not have been wholly human, had not this glimpse of Heaven filled him with a desire to pitch his tent at last, and dwell forever in this atmosphere of glory. But the ardent apostle's petition was neither timely nor well thought out. Christ did not deign even to notice his prayer. Peter in his fervor seemed to lose sight altogether of the fact, that this manifestation of Christ's divinity was vouchsafed him, only to strengthen his soul for coming events. Rest and peace are still a long way off. The wine-press of tribulation has yet to be trodden all the day long, and the adorable body of Christ has yet to be stained with streams of His own adorable blood. Within a few short weeks the scene is to shift from Thabor's top to Calvary's; Moses and Elias are to yield place to the thief on the right and the thief on the left; the Saviour's face is to be without a trace of beauty's light, and His garments, white as snow today, are to be dyed crimson. Peter himself is to crouch in fear at the foot of the hill of sorrows, and tearful watch the agony of his Master from a distance. And after the sacrifice is over, and after the glad morning of the Resurrection, he is to stand again on the neighboring mountain-top of Olivet,

and watch the Saviour slowly raise Himself from earth to Heaven, and disappear behind the clouds. Then an angel's voice will break the stillness; and, under the influence of its spell, Peter will turn his face towards the city, await the coming of the Holy Ghost, and, his tongue tipped with fire, will sally forth to win the world to Christ. Finally, after years of labor, and toil, and persecution, he will die crucified with his head downward in Rome, the centre and capital of heathendom.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here." Oh no, not for long. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here idle?" Up, up, ye sleepers; go down to the valley. This is a lull in the battle, to gather new strength; this is not lasting peace. Today your Master is God, clothed with all the splendor issuing from the throne of God. Tomorrow He will be a helpless man, in the hands of wolves ravening for blood. Today on Thabor He assumes some little of the majesty that is His from eternity, to make it easier for you to recognize God in Good Friday's mass of bleeding flesh. Ah, well He knows that the end is not yet. Peace comes after the war, and after the combat, rest. The war with the powers of hell is not yet over, the victory is not yet complete. Man's redemption from the slavery of hell is not yet an accomplished fact. Fate has decreed that the struggle shall cease only on Calvary, and Calvary is weeks in the distance. Peter, of course, with the limited vision of a mere man, knew nothing of all this; but Christ, with the far-seeing eye of God, looked out into the future, and saw the journey ahead. He was pressing on like a giant eager to run His course, and at last enter into glory at the right hand of His Father.

And these must be our sentiments. We have not here a lasting city. We are on the way to our true home. We are travellers among a strange people, and as such must allow nothing to impede our progress towards the home we long for, Heaven. Hours like the hour spent by Peter on Thabor may creep into our lives; but they fall far short of their purpose, if they induce us to delay long on the march. Trifles may start up and endeavor to lead us aside from the path we are keeping. But travellers, intent on resting again at home in the bosoms of real friends, close their eyes to such temptations, and

hurry the faster. Experience has taught such men that there is only one corner of the wide world able to satisfy their hearts, and that corner is the home of their childhood and youth. Experience has taught them that the love of only two beings on earth can fill their wants in the order of love, and that love is the fondness of a father and mother. Experience has taught them that, wander whithersoever they will, they will search in vain for the warmth and tenderness that animated the friendships of early years, for the affection that bound them in early life to neighbors breathing the same air, and brought up in the same surroundings with themselves. Other friends may endeavor to fill the void, may endeavor to make them forget the old scenes fast wearing to a memory. But they cannot do it, they cannot do it. They can half do it. They can make life less lonesome than it would be without their company. But they cannot make a man quite forget home and father, mother, brothers, sisters and happy childhood's smiling faces.

And, after all, home is but a shadow of Heaven. A man's birthplace is not so truly his home as Heaven is. The father and mother who watched over and nursed his young years are not so truly his father and mother as the God who sent him into life, and the Virgin Mary who is waiting with outstretched arms to receive him into Heaven. It is a sin therefore and a mistake we shall one day bitterly mourn to idle along the journey, to sit down with companions who are making rapid progress towards hell, to waste time and love on friends whose talk is honey inducing forgetfulness of God. This is not the place of happiness God set apart for His friends, this is not the paradise of peace promised from eternity to the elect. This is a valley of tears, this is a vineyard we have to hoe free from weeds, this is a battlefield. God has not yet stooped from His throne to dry our tears. It is not yet six o'clock, and the bell has not rung us home to our evening meal, at the table of the Lamb. Our Captain has not yet sounded the bugle to call His warriors in. The angel of death is His herald; and we must fight with hell, we must fight with sin, till this angel of death touches us with his wing, and delivers his message. No matter the cost, we are here to save our souls; and every other business is of secondary importance.

Salvation is a more vital concern than success in the world. Salvation settles our lot for eternity, success in the world settles our lot for a few swift years. Measured this way, salvation deserves our best efforts; success in the world ought to be content with our waste energies. We are of limited powers; our minds and wills, with all their big capacity for truth and good, are but finite energies, and know marked bounds. By very nature we cannot slave with head or heart to any two big interests without wholly or in part neglecting one of them; and, if business, or pleasure, or study, or anything else gets our whole attention throughout the year, God's service and our soul's welfare are going to suffer harm. We may succeed in rolling up a fortune, like the money-sharks on Wall Street; we may succeed in tasting every vile pleasure life knows, like the Sybarites of men and women on Broadway; we may move without break or interruption in an atmosphere of adulation and flattery, like the butterflies of fashionable society; but life's true purpose will be forgotten, our immortal souls will be damned to gratify our mortal bodies, and our deathbeds will find us empty handed, pierced with regrets, and torn with remorse. And we cannot even hope to save our souls, unless we make the practice of virtue a business. A man's thoughts and wishes invariably run towards his profession. An eminent lawyer eats law, drinks law, talks law; and he is never more at home than when busy with some problem of the law. In much the same way, an earnest Christian, impressed with the supreme need of saving his soul, is never even momentarily without thought of God, without thought of virtue and the things of God.

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Epistle, Ephes. 5; 1–9 *Gospel, St. Luke 11; 14–29*

"He that is not with me is against me."
—St. Luke 11, 23.

It is a well settled axiom in philosophy that every single deliberate act we perform is, as a matter of fact, good or bad. Walking, for instance, is in itself a most indifferent employment, and is at first sight neither innocent nor harmful. And yet we must feel persuaded, after weighing the reasons advanced by philosophy, that no man ever yet deliberately put a foot forward, without in that very instant, and by that very movement pleasing or offending God. Whatever may be said in favor of or against this theory of philosophy, it is evident from today's Gospel that nobody can occupy a middle position between the friendship and the enmity of Jesus Christ. In politics some men are wont, as the saying goes, to sit on the fence till events point them which way to jump. They are neither Democrats nor Republicans, till the hour of danger is passed; and then they hasten to enroll themselves with the winners. But in the matter of salvation there is no fence, there is no middle course. There are only two parties, two camps; and every man, woman, and child belong of necessity to one party or the other. We are fighting for Christ, or we are fighting for the devil; and our every thought, our every word, our every deed are blows dealt in Heaven's cause or hell's.

This is a fact that has far-reaching consequences. This is a fact that makes it quite impossible for a man to sit down and thus discourse with himself. My soul, we have been together through many wars; let us for a while enjoy the piping times of peace! We have gone a long journey towards God; let us rest a while! We have heaped away in our barns a

store of good things; let us eat, drink and make merry! What, take a vacation in God's service! You cannot do it. "He that is not with me is against me." To seek the quiet of peace, is downright treason. To welcome the inactivity of rest, is the crime of idleness. To abandon God in a hunt for pleasure is death. "He that gathereth not with me, scattereth." To pause in the work of garnering a harvest of merit, is to invite the four winds to make havoc with the work of a lifetime. In one word, to-day's Gospel is a commentary on the supreme necessity of honest labor and unremitting toil in the business of salvation. Eternity will be long enough for the fullest indulgence of our craving for rest. Heaven will be crowded to overflowing with sounds and sights to give joy to our ears without tiring them, to bless our eyes without fatiguing them. But rest, and joy, and pleasure, are not our chiefest employment here. God holds the earth too mean a place to make it the reward of His servants. It is a cursed Paradise, a garden of weeds, and its furrows are traces of God's anger. It possesses treasures of a size only with the paltry good done by worldings of average decency, by the half-hearted Christians whom God will be ashamed to acknowledge for friends on the day of judgment. These treasures must not be touched; or, if touched at all, must be handled with a heart free from preoccupying greed by such as ambition a place in the ranks of future princes in the Kingdom of God. The good things of earth are not meant for us! If they were meant for us, they would not be so completely in the grasp of God's enemies.

We are here to work, to suffer, and die; to fight and win; to fall with our swords in our hands and our faces towards the foe. Our wages await us on the other side of death, our crowns are poised ready in the hands of angels, and the shout of victory that we shall one day help to swell has been forever and is now rolling beyond the clouds. We are hoeing the rank growth of sin from our hearts, and the task keeps us busy from sunrise to sunset, and far into the night. "Whether we eat, or drink, or sleep, let us do all for the glory of God." That was St. Paul's watchword, and that is our motto. And members of the League, when they get down on their knees in the morning, to win for their day's work the blessing that rested

on every throb of the Sacred Heart, are realising their destiny. They are consecrating every trivial incident of the day with the seal of Christ's blood. They are emphatically with Christ, and well to the front in the fight. They are gathering a heap of good mountain high. They are not scattering.

As King of all tribes and all peoples, as the world's owner by the double right of creation and redemption, Christ summons the nations to war, plants His standard at the head of the universe, and invites every man, woman and child on its surface to join hands with Him in the glorious work of whipping sin from His Kingdom. Every strong arm in the world is needed to crown this great and grand enterprise with success; and not to take sides with Christ, is to take sides with His deadliest foe, the enemy of souls. We must not be trimmers in the service of God. He has more patience with downright sinners than He has with lazy servants, who waste their time and their talents in supine idleness. We must enlist in the ranks of Christ's army, or perish with the heathen. In his Commedia, Dante assigns men of this ignoble stamp a place of torment eminently befitting their character. Between the gate to hell, with its ominous warning, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," and the first of hell's nine circles, stretches a dark plain, the camping ground of souls the poet denominates neutrals or trimmers. With all his native hatred of laziness and inactivity, he describes them as men who lived without blame and without praise. Heaven, he says, bars them entrance, to save its own beauty; hell refuses to receive them, because the lost would have reason to glory over their discomfiture. Angels move among them, that remnant band, which in the great battle sided with neither Michael nor Lucifer; and these neutral angels would seem to be identical with the fairies, so frequent and so familiar in Irish story.

We cannot complain that God leaves us without work to do in His kingdom. Self-improvement and zeal for the salvation of souls are an open field for activity; and we are disloyal to Christ, when we neglect one line of work or the other. The interior life is no enemy to activity. God never meant it to be a refuge for lazy idleness. It is a field for more strenuous and persevering endeavor than any trade or commerce knows.

No hour of the day or night is without its oppressive weight of labor. New lessons must be learned, new virtues must be practised; and the eternal task of hammering self into shape is without end or finish. Chiefest among our enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil; our very hearts, the seat and centre of our loves. The wrong example of the unworthy is a steady incentive to sin. Evil, when first seen, provokes horror; but use robs it of this quality, and by slow or swift degrees the man, much in its company, imagines that wrong is the innocent victim of fanatical persecution. The abuse heaped on evil wins sympathy for the condition; and, influenced by this unworthy motive, some men stand with wrong as against right, and think to justify their position. The prosperity of the wicked once shook David's resolution, and we are no stronger than he. It is no easy task to deny oneself every gratification in a world up to its shoulders in unholy pleasures. It is even harder to do rude violence to so near and dear a friend as self, and hate what half of our being loves. We are not all angel, and sin is no less appealing to the flesh than virtue is to the spirit. "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." St. Matthew 26, 41. And, as if the world and the flesh were not foes enough to tax our courage, the devil joins hands with their forces, and lends them all the military cunning of which he is capable. We have to do battle with those principalities of the air, mentioned by St. Paul; and a crowded hell bears loud witness to their skill and prowess in war. These demons have met and vanquished stouter hearts than any we can boast, they have tricked and fooled wiser heads than any we can call our own. They have power to assume a pleasing shape, they are careful to proclaim themselves our partisans, and they scatter with flowers the broad road over which they drive their dumb herds of insensate cattle. Even when their artifices are open to the eye, when they encounter defeat, they never dream of surrender. A moment later they are back to their work of destruction; they take up the thread of temptation, where loss checked their progress, and are in perpetual possession of the exhilarating ability to forget reverses. The persistence of hell is a mystery, and men's faintness is a matter of everyday experience. The

devil never gives quarter, when he wins; and he never retires from the fight, when he loses. If he abandons one corner of the field, he straightway moves for war in another. Doggedness of purpose, perseverance in effort, is the one virtue he carried away with him from the wreck of his fortunes; and, remembering the circumstance, we must, to fight him with advantage, put on the same quality. In our struggle with temptation we must be no less persistent than hell.

Zeal for the world's conversion gathers new energy from the thought, that all the pain of the Lord Christ's Passion has the salvation of souls for single object. Since its consecration by the hallowed and hallowing touch of Christ, work in the vineyard is divine, and association with Christ in this sublime purpose surpasses the dignity of kings. We love them that love us; all the love of our fond Redeemer resides in His one quality of Saviour; and He wants us to manifest our love of Him in the same arduous capacity. In the world around us there are souls without number to be saved, and we can never complain that opportunities to ply our trade are wanting. Every neighbor is a centre of endeavor, and a field for exercise. Christ's cry from the cross, "I thirst," should be forever ringing in our ears, to harden us to courage and goad us to activity. We must work hard, and pray harder for the world's conversion. "Thy Kingdom come," is our motto, and we are knights in the army of the Lord. We must close ranks, grip tighter our arms, and go down to the battle like Crusaders on fire with the enthusiasm of a soldierly Christian spirit.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Epistle, Galatians 4; 22–30 *Gospel, St. John 6; 1–15*

"This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world."
—St. John 6, 14.

The central figure in today's Gospel is the commanding personage of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God come down from Heaven to awaken a dead world, and start a new era in history. Grouped about Him, or standing or sitting, are men, women and children to the number of 5000 and over. The twelve apostles, His body-guard, are close at His side, and two of them, Philip and Andrew, are conversing with Him in a tone loud enough to be heard. Their words are a key to the whole situation. The Master, to excite their attention and fix the eyes of their faith on the miracle He contemplates performing, takes counsel with them about ways and means of feeding the multitude. They are at a complete loss; and, without at all intending to meet the difficulty, talk of a boy in the crowd with five loaves and two fishes. But omnipotence is never at a loss, and Christ is omnipotent. He signals the men to seats on the grass, and row rises above row on the hillside. He takes the loaves and the fishes in His sacred hands, and with a thought of the night before His Passion, when He would institute the Eucharist, He gives thanks, and distributes the meal of miracle, the food multiplied a thousand times under His touch. The fragments of the feast fill twelve large baskets. The surprised and grateful guests make their profession of faith in His divinity. They call Him the prophet to come, and are minded to make Him their king. But His designs are other, and He flees away into the mountain, alone. The people seek their homes. Evening comes, and the disciples go down to the sea.

This in a few words is the story of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes. But, to thoroughly understand the event and derive to our souls the lessons it is intended to convey, we must dig beneath the surface, and meditate every little detail. And the first circumstance to arrest our attention is the faith and earnestness of that multitude. The crowd gathered that day on the hillside, with the Sea of Galilee at its foot, hid many a heart that loved Christ with an enduring love, hid many a mind captive to belief in His divinity. Men are not wont to put aside their daily occupations to follow after the heels of an ordinary teacher. They are not wont to journey for three days without a thought of food just to hear an ordinary man speak. They saw in the countenance of Christ a something that breathed of Heaven, they detected in His every word whispers of a wisdom born somewhere off the earth, and the grace of God was tight around them like a chain. They would have gone to the ends of the earth with such a leader. They would have counted it a favor to die in His cause, and their enthusiasm, no doubt, carried them a few weeks later up to Jerusalem, to assist at their hero's final triumph.

Faith hath a perfect work, and men under the influence of faith are transformed. It pours strength into the limbs of the coward. It feeds light to the dull eyes of the downcast, and quickens the steps of the lazy. It opens a new world to fools disappointed in this, and lends the courage of hope to despair. To hearts tired of and disgusted with other objects it offers a love fond as a mother's, tender as a wife's, and constant as eternity. It arrests progress in every other direction, to point man's efforts towards God. It robs aimless wandering of all excuse for existence, to crowd every corner of a man's being with one big absorbing motive. When at all encouraged, this faith makes quick haste to crown every energy with an earnestness, that rests like a halo on the deeds of the great. And earnestness is the soul of work. It is what makes the difference between unfinished and consummate artists, between men ranking high in their professions and men low down in the ladder to fame. It is the touchstone of sanctity, and exalted holiness of life is an impossibility without the enthusiasm born of earnestness. When a man's heart is in his

work, he is in earnest; and a man's heart, in the language of Scripture, is never far from the place where his treasure or richest possession hides. Faith has a way of shutting the eyes tight against everything of less value than God. It has a way of convincing the mind that everything outside of God is a trifle, that God is the only treasure. Thus it happens that a man wrapped up in the work of salvation becomes a man wrapped up in God, absorbed in Him and His Heavenly interests; and absorption in God is the secret of the saints. There is nothing holier, nothing higher, nothing securer. Sin has no avenue for entrance, because God stands guard everywhere; the spirit of recollection fostered raises the soul above this world's disquieting cares and deafening noises; the peace of a contented conscience banishes present fears and doubts touching the future.

Faith can, therefore, make us men of God, men like the 5000 sung in today's Gospel, men stripped of selfishness and clothed from head to foot with the love of Christ, men willing to abandon home, forget food, surrender business, to hear the Master's message, to follow in His footsteps, and taste the sweet comfort of knowing Him near. He is with us; and, if we close our ears to other sounds, we can catch His whispers. He is walking ahead; and, if we turn our eyes to neither the right nor the left, we can see Him beckoning us on. He is waiting for us in our churches, to bless us in the morning on our way to work; to kill the sorrows of a day, when with nightfall we return home. Prayer is conversation with God, every act of virtue is a step forward in His footprints, and a visit to the Blessed Sacrament puts us within a stone's throw of His Real Presence. We cannot, rivalling the 5000, make Him King of Galilee; but we can set Him on another throne, and that without danger of seeing Him flee. We can inscribe our hearts, "Kept for the Master," hold our thoughts to their duty as courtiers in His service, and make our single selves His Kingdom. He deserves this favor at our hands. He has worked miracles for us. He has multiplied, He is daily multiplying for us the loaves and fishes. There is no life so insignificant that it has not somewhere along its course felt omnipotence exerted in its behalf. Jesus Christ is God today

as He was yesterday; and His tenderness, His loveliness, His pity are not worn, not diminished by the flight of years. If we fail to experience His goodness oftener, the fault lies with ourselves. We are too much engrossed with the meaner concerns of this life to recognize His visits. We are too unappreciative and too forgetful of old kindnesses to deserve new ones. But the same old process continues. Daily we are the recipients of blessings in spite of our ingratitude. We are grown so accustomed to miracles, that they appeal no more to our consciousness as such, and we are come to regard them rights. We get up in the morning with laughing health for companion, without reflecting that God and His angels watched at our bedside throughout the night. We live down the day's troubles, happy in the thought that near and distant friends are doing us the homage of memory and love; and all the while God is sustaining their remembrance and their affection.

Occasionally He intervenes with a little more noise and suddenness, and even then we are not alive to His interference and His presence. Why? Well, because He works along hidden lines; because, unwilling to startle us, He keeps His omnipotence well in the background. He treated the 5000 in an exactly similar way. He is the God who by a word drew from absolute nothingness this amazing heaven, this stupendous earth. He is the God, whose might has for measure creative power; and yet in today's Gospel-history He uses the five loaves and the two fishes for starting point. He multiplies, He does not create. He might have furnished this famished throng with a feast of delicacies, far surpassing in number and luxury the manifold dishes under which a Nero's table groaned. But He preferred for prudential reasons to set before them most meagre fare, the daily rations of men who lived by the sea and tillage. A banquet fit for kings would under the circumstances have taxed His Almighty power no more than the frugal meal He spread on the hillside. One effort would cost Him as little labor as the other. He chose what seems to us the lesser, to hide Himself, and give the 5000 a chance to display a livelier faith, a more courageous loyalty, a fonder gratitude.

God's invitation to service is not issued in the shape of a

court-summons, with marshal and sheriffs armed to enforce obedience. The miracles, on which He bases His claims to divine ambassadorship, are not so cogent that the evil minded are robbed of every pretext for disbelief. The passages in Holy Scripture, on which the authority and supremacy of His Church rest, admit of misunderstanding; and the ill-disposed can with an effort escape the argument they contain. He wants a free service, He likes a cheerful giver; and, if things were made plainer, generosity would have small room for play, the sacrifice demanded of us by faith would not be the holocaust it is. Man's will must have a large field for exercise in the homage of faith, and the will gets a chance to act, only when obscurity hangs thick upon the truth. When light like the midday sun shines full upon a truth, the mind works outside of the will's influence. It can follow only one course. Acceptance is a necessity. No one ever yet considered it heroic to believe that two and two make four, that fire burns, and that a whole is greater than any one of its parts. But pride of intellect suffers a severe shock and rebels, when confronted with mysteries. The man proud of his intellectual attainments can only with the assistance of grace agree to acknowledge Three Persons in one God, the miracle of the Real Presence, the existence of a hell kept hot by the anger of a meek and merciful God. The man sunk in selfishness views faith with a suspicious eye, when she preaches the loveliness of the cross; he instinctively turns to flee, when she proclaims war against the passions. The love of God alone, only a sharp command from His Captain, can keep such a man in his place, can hold him to his duty.

We are not ourselves above the temptation. We are come of a race tainted with pride and selfishness. They are an inheritance, transmitted to us with these bodies by our fathers, and we carry them with us to the grave. They are unwelcome and dangerous companions, but none the less constant, none the less persistently present. Faith can shorten their power for harm, an abiding remembrance of today's 5000 seated in the grass near Galilee's lake can steady our scattered wits, and crush unfaith, when it makes overtures with our worse selves. We are in the service of a good God. We are fighting a dear

foe in the cause of a dearer friend. We are fighting self in the cause of that Christ, who today levied on His omnipotence to feed heroes whose instincts we ambition. In virtue of our membership in the true Church, we can trace back our lineage to the men and women who that day professed faith in the divinity of Christ. Brave sires beget brave children! We are the sons of those apostles, who reverently distributed the loaves and fishes, and, with exultation beaming all over their honest faces, gathered the twelve baskets of fragments. Blood will tell! The sons of heroes emulate the deeds of their fathers. True Catholics are apostolic. They stand ready to journey to the ends of the earth for Christ's sake. They live only to plant His Kingdom in their own hearts, and in the hearts of others. They like to assist at faith's triumphs, and they die conscious that their energies and their aspirations have spent themselves on the grandest, the most ennobling of projects, the spread of God's greater glory.

PASSION SUNDAY

Epistle, Hebrews 9; 11–15 *Gospel, St. John 3; 46–59*

"And therefore He is the mediator of the new testament."
—HEBREWS 9, 15.

In today's epistle St. Paul is intent on proving to the Hebrews the superiority of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross over the sacrifices of the Old Law. To emphasize the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, he alludes to the fact that it was offered but once, and obtained eternal redemption. The Jews repeated their sacrifice for sin every year. Christ our High priest entered once into the Holy of holies, and never afterward departed therefrom. The high priest of the Jews on each recurrent anniversary entered in, to remain only a few moments, and then return to the people. Apart from other more essential differences, these are striking characteristics of Christ's sacrifice on Calvary, and as such are much insisted upon by St. Paul in his instruction to the Jews. Our faith contains no more consoling dogma than redemption through Christ. The scheme of Redemption, as proposed to us by our Church for belief, is at the same time full of comfort, full of courage, and a ringing call to duty. It is full of comfort, because we who were hell's captives are now free. It is full of courage, because our Man of sorrows made acquaintance with and welcomed grief able to bear down a giant. It is a ringing call to duty, because, though our freedom was purchased at the cost of Christ's saving blood, we can retain it only by a generous life of self-sacrifice and self-denial.

In the scourging at the pillar, Jesus is being whipped as a slave. We are the slaves, and He is purchasing us from bondage. Beneath the heavy weight of the cross, He is carrying our burden on His bruised shoulders. In the crucifixion, He is treading the wine-press of tribulation in our stead. He

is clearing away from our foreheads with His saving blood the handwriting against us, the brand that proclaimed us servants of sin and slaves of the devil. Throughout the agony in the garden He is a giant exulting to run His course, and He enters the lists practically stripped of His divinity. He is setting a lesson in courage to weak men and tender women, and He carries with Him into the battle only what arms He has mercifully vouchsafed His creatures. His divinity stands one side, and, without assuaging pain, merely keeps the humanity from sinking and perishing. He experiences terrors that never yet fell to the lot of man. The fury of hell could devise no crueller torments. He pours into a cup all the accumulated wrath of God, and tastes its infinite bitterness. His soul is sorrowful unto death, but divinity refuses to let it die, and it lives only to undergo the agony of a thousand deaths. All the myriad pains and insults of Passion-week are before His eyes. He feels the scourge descending, He shrinks beneath the cruel weight of the crown of thorns. The cross is on His shoulders, the nails are in his hands and feet, the spear is tearing open His sacred side. But these are not His heaviest woes. His soul is a prey to consuming fear. Despair, of course, could never touch the heart of Christ. He is God, and despair is the inheritance of demons. But nothing prevented the sacred humanity of Christ from tasting all the bitterness resident in utter hoplessness. Nothing prevented His human nature from experiencing all the wretchedness that overwhelmed Judas, when, after the Master's betrayal, he journeyed from the city to the field of blood, with the rope of self-murder in his hands. Your ingratitude and mine provoke in Him a crushing sense of abandonment. He sees the men, the women and the children of ages marching in long procession to hell, deriding His Cross as they pass. He counts the scattered multitudes of souls against which His saving blood shall have one day to rise in judgment. He derives no solace from the hosts of the elect, purchased by Redemption from the earth. God the Father with seeming cruelty hides this vision from His eyes. Defeat, failure, despair are gnawing at His heart-roots; and He feels as much an object of hatred in God's sight, as if the accumulated iniquity of time were branded on his forehead, and all

Heaven were come down to look at the monster. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaias 53, 6. And in the scourging at the pillar, that miracle of brutality, and pain, and injustice, what an example of bravery He is to us cowards! What a lesson to His followers in the hard art of cultivating ruggedness of mind and ruggedness of body in the cause of virtue. Who can weigh or measure the stinging pain of that night in the pretorium of Pilate? Reflect that the sacred body subjected to this torture is the temple of the divinity, the fairest among the sons of men, actuated by a soul that never harbored an offensive or injurious thought. It is the body of our gentle Jesus of the Sacred Heart, tender and delicate as the Maiden Mother, who gave Him life, and nursed His boyhood years against this holiday of butchery. His tenderness was of the sort that steps one side to let a worm live. The more delicate the organism, the finer the threads of feeling, the sharper the sense of pain. And Omnipotence, as it were, taxed itself in the production of the body of Christ. It was most responsive to every jarring shock of discomfort, and suffered with a keenness beyond the telling. The instruments of torture were as cruel as demons of hell could devise, rods and leathern thongs, set with pieces of metal. And the force behind them was the brutal strength of Roman soldiers. To add to His helplessness, He is tied to a pillar, unable to ward off with a lifted hand the blows that rained fierce and heavy on His quivering body. Verily, in the words of Isaias, there is no soundness in Him. Verily, He is a mass of wounds, and bruises, and swelling sores. Verily, His whole head is sick, and His whole heart is sad. We are not ourselves strangers to sorrow, and Jesus at the pillar sits closer to our breaking hearts than Jesus in Heaven. We can close our eyes to Christ on Thabor, because Heaven is years ahead, and, before the triumph, victory must be won. We cannot in this valley of tears lose sight of Jesus in pain, because we need His heroic example for encouragement and support.

And, to crown these favors of comfort and courage, the dogma of Redemption, as proposed by our Church for belief, is a ringing call to duty. God could have made our salvation independent of our mean efforts. Certainly the plan would have

approved itself to the lazy devotees of sin, it would have invested God's goodness with a doubtful kind of glory at the expense of His holiness, His justice and His wisdom. But God never makes a mistake. And so, though He accepted Christ's passion and death as full atonement for all our transgressions, He expects us, and obliges us to make the merits of Christ our own by steady and resolute compliance with Christ's wishes. Christ put at our disposal a treasury abundantly able to cancel all our debts with an offended Father; but He at the same time imposed upon us the obligation of stirring ourselves and turning the key in the lock. He transferred the vigor of His efforts in our behalf, the merits of His thirty-three years on earth, to the sacraments and other means of grace, and bade us make use of these means, if we would be saved. If any Christian, in this enlightened age of ours, neglects to avail himself of the opportunity, he cannot plead ignorance for excuse. Christ, through the agency of his mouth-piece, the true Church, has published His wishes to the world; and ignorance in the face of such enlightenment is inexcusable. Prejudice, worldliness, love of ease, may indeed account for the folly of men, who neglect the sacraments and other means of grace; but prejudice, worldliness, love of ease, when they clash with the laws of God, are punishable offenses.

Christ, then, is our Redeemer, but after such a manner that His death will avail us nothing, unless we do our half of the work. His grace can be had for the asking, but it will not be granted unless application is made. From Baptism, the sacrament of infancy, to Extreme Unction, the sacrament of life's close, the Church, the dispenser of Christ's gifts to men, holds out to us helps adapted to every period and every condition of life. Moreover, Christ in His capacity of Redeemer filled a threefold office. He was at the same time Saviour, Teacher and King. As Saviour, He paid our ransom, and struck the shackles of sin from our feet. As teacher, He left us scattered up and down the gospels precious legacies of virtue for our imitation. As king, He founded a Church; and invited us, summoned us to huddle close together under the safety of His standard. As invisible Head of the Church, He is seated on a throne, watching its members fight the good fight of salvation,

like an army in battle array. His vicar, His visible representative, the Pope of Rome, lights up in our minds a torch that unfailingly illumines our pathway. We Catholics follow no uncertain and warring leaders. Doubts never overcast our faith; and, while strangers on the outside drive ahead, not knowing whither, we husband the strength they squander on vain enquiry, to confirm our wills in good, and make ready a clean abode in our hearts for God. God wants us to save our souls. He wants us to be forever happy with Him in Heaven. And yet it is a good thing to remember that He will derive no sorrow, no inconvenience whatever, from our eternal residence in hell. Whether we go to Heaven or hell, His glory remains substantially the same. Whether we make the happiness of the elect or the pains of the damned our lot for eternity, God shall receive from creation the very amount of glory and praise He determined on having from the beginning. His Son Jesus Christ died for us, poured out the last drop of His blood for us. He is Himself through the agency of His priests continually dinning words of warning into our ears, and conscience is loud in denouncing our harmful disloyalties.

But, when all has been said, it forever remains true that our destiny is in our own hands. Good and evil, weal and woe, are set before us to choose; and, to whatever side we stretch our hands, God has solemnly promised to sacredly respect our choice. The efficacy of redemption, the constraining power of grace, the freedom of human liberty, are hard questions; and must forever remain partial mysteries. Calvary's sacrifice is sufficient ransom for a million worlds, and yet some of the ransomed are going to walk past the Cross to hell. Grace is the might of an omnipotent God, and yet the feebleness of man can resist and defeat it. Free will is a creature vested with some of the independence and some of the omnipotence of the Creator. Redemption is, therefore, from one point of view, universal in its effects; from another point of view, limited. Grace, from one point of view, is as strong as God; from another point of view, as weak as water. Human liberty from one point of view, cannot lift a finger; from another point of view, it can institute rebellion against the Lord of the Universe. But we Catholics are not in these matters ships tossed about by every

wind of doctrine. We have a Church, armed with credentials from on High; and, though she presumes not to clear up every mystery, she leaves us in no doubt concerning what we are to believe on every one of these several heads. Her doctrine is clear and fixed, admitting of absolutely no doubt, dispute or compromise. Men may from prejudice, pride or selfishness refuse to enter her fold, they may object to the stiff rigidity of her teaching, and heap with blame her undying attitude of intolerance against error; but there she stands, the witness of the ages, just as the Lord Christ made her, her arms wide open to receive, without a single concession to the clamors of passion, whatever son or daughter of God seeks peace and salvation.

EASTER SUNDAY

Epistle, 1 Cor. 5; 7, 8 *Gospel, St. Mark 16; 1–7*

"And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

—1 Cor. 15, 14.

St. Paul in this short but vigorously expressive paragraph bases belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ on His resurrection from the dead. Throughout His life Christ claimed to be the Son of God. In proof of His claim He wrought stupendous miracles without number. Rather than retract a single word of all that He had said in support of His divinity, He suffered an ignominious death on the cross. To remove any doubt that might have settled on the minds of sincere searchers for the truth, three years before His death He solemnly promised to rise triumphant from the grave three days after His burial. His resurrection, then, was to be the supreme test of His divinity. He had raised others from the dead, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Naim, the brother of Mary and Martha. He had even invested His apostles with the same tremendous power over death. It only remained for Him to raise Himself from the dead according to promise. His mission would then be accomplished, and doubt in His Godhead would then have no excuse. If he failed to keep His word, His mission would be a failure; and the doctrine He taught would deserve no recognition. But He kept His word; and, when St. Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, Judea was full of witnesses willing most solemnly to swear that the self-same Jesus, who had for three years preached salvation to them, arose from the dead and for forty days appeared in diverse places, to instruct His disciples and comfort His friends. Our preaching, like St. Paul's, is founded on this incontestable fact, and our preaching is not vain. Your faith is founded on the same fact, and your faith

is not vain. Belief in the divinity of Christ is the test of salvation, as it is the cornerstone of religion. There can be no Christianity without Christ, the Son of the living God; and the Christianity that refuses to see God in Christ is but a refinement of Judaism. For Christians of this stamp the Messiah is not yet come. By this test we stand or we fall.

And it is a lamentable fact that, though Christ died, and though Christ rose again from the dead, thousands upon thousands of men and women in our land are deluded by false teachers into the belief that by holding to a few general tenets, in no way inconvenient or disagreeable to human nature, they are professing the faith Jesus Christ came to teach. These are a blind people following in the footsteps of blind leaders; and the road they keep has disaster for finish. But they are a wilfully blind people. God has in many hidden ways spoken to their hearts, He has on more than one occasion caught them idle and thrust upon them doubts, the solution of which would have long since placed them where they belong. But for reasons best known to themselves they have disregarded the inner voice of conscience, and have summarily banished these saving doubts. The voice of conscience elicits but a feeble sound, and the noise of passion can easily reduce it to silence; but such as now do violence to conscience will find on judgment-day that its strength is the strength of God, and that it takes a merciless revenge on them that unceremoniously thrust its warnings aside. They will discover, when too late to apply a remedy, that it is fatal to begrudge God the little time and effort required to search out and find His will; that he courts death, who stolidly makes up his mind to sacrifice everything to convenience, and, right or wrong, jog along the road to ruin merely because he would have to keep strange company along the road to life. These men have another code of conduct when their purses are threatened. If the document, on which their title to a certain piece of property depends, contains a clause that in some obscure way casts doubt upon their ownership, they at once enlist the services of some lawyer learned in the law, and engage him to straighten out the matter and remove the doubt. If they wake up some morning with a racking pain, that they feel to be a sure forerunner of some dread disease, they

never count it too much of a hardship to summon the physician for advice and a prescription. But, because the consequences of a mistake in the matter of religion are discernible only in the next life, and because their neighbors think none the less of them, whether they belong to the true Church of Christ or not, provided only they preserve an outward air of respectability, these eminently imprudent men never think it worth while to have their doubts cleared up in matters of faith, never take the pains to have the dread disease of heresy expelled from their souls. And yet, to make a mistake in the matter of religion is to live with a flaw in one's title not to a house, or a lot, or a bank account, but to a seat in the Kingdom of God. And for him who loses his seat in Heaven eternity has but one place left, the pit of fire God's wrath hollowed out in the bowels of the earth for rebel angels and for rebel men. And rebel men are not they alone who make open avowal of impiety and unbelief, but they too, who, endeavoring to effect a compromise between God and the world, strive to serve God without at the same time inconveniencing themselves. They are not willing to be heart and soul with Christ, and yet would take it ill to be considered part and parcel of those who are against Christ. But their conduct belies their profession, and Christ had them in mind that day He declared in unmistakable language, "He that is not with me, is against me." St. Luke 11, 23. Christ is as much displeased with the half-hearted homage of insincere Christians as He is with the bold defiance of thorough unbelievers.

If I have insisted at what may seem unseasonable lengths on the lamentable condition of souls wandering in the shadows of uncertainty and doubt, my purpose has been to warm within you the love of that faith for which countless martyrs have died, and for the propagation of which many a man and many a woman are today sacrificing, if not life itself, at least all that makes life from a natural viewpoint worth the living. You cannot be too careful of this jewel of your faith. People in surroundings more favorable to its preservation have lost it. Surrounded as you are on all sides by neighbors of excellent character and reputation, who profess to think this sect or that sect sufficient guarantee of salvation, the devil will

often take occasion to instil the seeds of poison into your souls; and, if you lend him an ear, he will exert all his skill and experience to persuade you to think that one religion is as good as another; that after all Sunday Mass, monthly confession and communion, the fasts of the Church, self-restraint, are means to salvation that may be used or not used at will. It is a grievous sin and a direct insult to Almighty God, to say or think that one Church, or one set of beliefs, is as good as another. Ordinarily, salvation cannot be found outside of the Catholic Church. Only one Church is the true Church, and every other form of worship is necessarily wrong. Jesus Christ did not come down from Heaven to establish a Church, and then leave men free to enter that Church or not, as they pleased. Jesus Christ is not so indifferent to the truth as to teach me one thing and teach my neighbor the exact opposite; to teach me that He is really, truly and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist, and to teach my neighbor that He is not there present; to teach me that marriage is so sacred a thing that death alone can separate husband and wife, and to teach my neighbor that a court of law can for trifling reasons declare null and void this holiest of contracts, and leave the man and woman free to choose other partners. Jesus Christ is God, this morning's mystery proclaims it; and Jesus Christ would not be God, yea, He would not be the sort of man we respect, the man of honor and of honesty, could He be guilty of such self-contradiction. One Church, then, is not so good as another; and the creed we adopt in this life is going to make a mighty big difference in the destiny in store for us after death. Hell and Heaven depend in large degree on the choice of Church we make. If a man wilfully puts himself outside the path Christ appointed men to keep, that man has only his own perverseness to blame, if he walks into hell.

We Catholics must likewise be able to give honest enquirers a reason for the faith within us. Our cause is a good one, it is the cause of Jesus Christ; and Holy Scripture, from the first page of the Old Testament to the last page of the New, abounds with testimonies corroborative of it. Every dogma contained in its catechism has God's word for authority, every practice it inculcates has the voice of God and the voice of the ages for

warrant. Our Church entrusts the defense of her doctrine, not to unskilled laymen, but to trained theologians, familiar with Scripture and able to answer all comers. But there is one passage in Holy Scripture, with which even laymen ought to be familiar. It is the groundwork of our faith, and the guiding star of our lives. It contains in a nutshell all Catholic theology. It is the starting-point and the end of controversy. It effectively closes the mouths of all adversaries. It occurs in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, and is the narrative of an incident in the second year of Our Lord's public life. It is a golden document, and I commend it to your most serious attention. St. Matt. 16; 13–20. "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." St. Matt. 16, 18.

In every science there are principles, or propositions, or statements, that, once proved true, lead to innumerable conclusions; and it would be the height of folly to ask a scientist to prove these conclusions, after he has once proved the principles on which they depend. Now, the truth evident from this text is the fact that Christ one day established His Church, and made St. Peter its head; and from this truth as from a principle everything in our faith follows. The Catholic Church is the one Church of Christ, what she teaches Christ teaches, and her every dogma has Christ for author. Here is the argument. It requires but little reflection to see that Christ established His Church with intent that it remain the one true Church till the end of time. In fact He said as much when establishing it. But St. Peter was to live less than a hundred years. What was to become of Christ's Church when St. Peter died? What will become of England when King George dies? Why, the present Prince of Wales, his legitimate successor, will be proclaimed king. In the same way, when St. Peter died, his legitimate successor stepped into the place St. Peter vacated, and so on, till the end of time. The Popes have been these legitimate successors in the See of Rome; and Pius XI, the present Sovereign Pontiff, is the head of Christ's Church by a clearer title than any on which the Prince of Wales will be able to found his claim to rule in England, when his father is numbered with the dead. Counting Pius XI, there have been already 266

Popes, and history contains as faithful a record of their doings as of the victories won by George Washington. When Pope Pius XI is gathered to his fathers, another Pope shall, as surely as the sun is shining, take his place; and God's Church shall not be without a Pope till the end of time, when Christ will reward our tired eyes with His own visible presence in Heaven. Where Peter is, there is the Church; and the preacher, whose credentials are not signed and sealed by Pope Pius, is no minister of Christ, no ambassador from God; and the faithful who refuse allegiance to Pope Pius are no children of Christ, are not of God's people. Martin Luther, Henry VIII. and every so-called Reformer, the parents of all the modern sects whatever their names, were not the legitimate successors of St. Peter, and they were born fifteen hundred years too late to found the true Church of Christ. Luther was a renegade monk, a man who once solemnly swore at the foot of God's altar forever to renounce all the joys attendant on wedlock, and afterwards married a nun he first poisoned with the seeds of error and then used as the tool of his passions. Henry was the vile assassin of deluded women, who, yielding to his flattery, consented to share with him an adulterous bed of infamy. The Catholic Church is the Church of the Popes, what she teaches is the teaching of Christ, and the teaching of Christ is true. This is the principle behind which we entrench ourselves, and our principle is impregnable. This is the faith on which we Catholics stake our eternal salvation, and we run no risk. It is your duty and mine to pray still for such as wander in darkness and ignorance, to forgive in patience whatever wrong they do us. Heaven knows the hard lot in store for them, and I would not be guilty of adding to their misery. It is your duty and mine to lead them by word and example to the truth. What though they despise us, what though they misinterpret our practices of piety, what though they turn us into ridicule whenever opportunity offers! We still have abundant reason to thank God that we are let live, and are not hounded to death for the faith we profess. There was a time when Catholics could not walk the streets of old Rome without being seized and thrown for food to the wild beasts of the circus. Less than three hundred years ago Catholics in England and Ireland had to forfeit all their

earthly possessions for the sacred privilege of hearing Mass; school masters, who endeavored to keep alive their fathers' faith in the hearts of the children were mercilessly massacred; priests wherever detected in the kingdom were summarily put to a death more cruel than any the most bloodthirsty savages inflict on their victims. And the history of those times is glorious with instances of heroism, that should make us submit with joy to whatever little inconveniences our belief may today impose upon us. Perhaps the fruit of our patience will be the conversion of our friends; and perhaps our misguided enemies, recognizing something divine in our forbearance, will at last yield to the influence of grace, and surrender to example, where wordy disputes would only enrage and embitter them.

We never grow angry or lose patience with an outsider. His rejection of the truth is his own loss, not ours. He offends the God we serve; but God can take care of His glory, and God knows best how to avenge insults offered to His majesty, and the sacredness of His truth. We know the superhuman effort change of creed demands in a friend; and pity is in order, not anger. His acquaintance, his family connections, his very household are perhaps too much attached to error to follow his good example; and so there would be in the event of his conversion division at home, and abroad the taunts of ill-advised or less generous friends. He would have to begin life over again; and this new method of life would be crowded with practices supremely distasteful to human nature. Under pain of mortal sin he would have to hear Mass on Sunday, he would have to keep the fasts of the Church, he would have to kneel frequently at the feet of a priest and confide to his ear secrets, that he would like to hide from God. These are hard tasks, and, without help from Heaven, quite beyond the strength of mortal man. But this help is never denied the earnest Christian, willing to put his hand to the work. And God insists on even greater sacrifices when His glory is in question. He has an inalienable right to our service, and He can no more forego this right than He can repudiate His own existence. No valid excuse can be urged for exemption from God's service. If my very life stands in the way of serving Him, my life must be surrendered. And so the man who is not precisely where God

wants him to be, must get there as quickly as possible at the expense even of what he values more highly than life. Christ had this very case in mind, when He once said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." St. Matt. 10, 37. God's true servants know the full meaning of these words, and God's true servants taste all the bitterness they contain. It is a miracle of daily recurrence in our Church, to see young men and young women, aware of the treasure hidden in God's invitation, abandon everything, home, friends, the companions and the hopes of childhood, and seal their young lives to God's single service in religion.

What reward can we promise the generous heroes willing to make the sacrifices demanded by membership in the true Church? Will they be blessed with health, wealth and happiness? This we cannot promise. Nay, God may signify His pleasure at their conduct by making them more and more resemble His well beloved Son, Jesus Christ. And Christ died the outcast of His people, on the gibbet of the cross, His sacred body torn by the lashes of Roman soldiery. Catholicity is far from encasing her children in a coat of mail, proof against disease, poverty and sorrow. Barring peace of conscience, the only promises she can make her children turn on enjoyments that belong to another world, to the life beyond the grave. These enjoyments are real only to the eyes of faith; and men in whom faith is dead cannot see them; and, because they cannot see them, cannot long for them. What the eye never sees, the heart never craves for. Catholic hope is founded on Catholic faith; and Catholic hope is concerned chiefly with what is going to happen after death. "If," as St. Paul puts it, "in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. 15, 19. A Catholic's hope in Christ, like St. Paul's, is not confined to the little years we sojourn on earth. It soars above and beyond the tomb. It embraces eternity. It looks forward to a glorious and triumphant resurrection, like that of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, its author and its guarantee. It counts as sure an eternity in the bosom of God, where, to use the beautiful language of St. John, "the saints of

God shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Apoc. 7, 17.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Epistle, 1 John 5; 4–10 *Gospel, St. John 20; 19–31*

"Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them."
—St. John 20, 23.

The passage just read is St. John's narrative of two apparitions made the apostles by the newly risen Saviour. One of the two had place late in the evening of Easter Sunday; the other, a week after. To say nothing of the sweetly tender circumstance that Christ's goodness of heart refused to let a whole day pass without comforting His friends by a visible and tangible proof of His real resurrection from the dead, we have in the words of our text an instructive lesson, fuller even of present joy, and fuller still of courage for all our future lives. Christ's first pronouncement as Head of the Church commissioned His apostles to forgive and retain sins. No man, prepared to accept the Scriptures in their plain and proper sense, can deny that the language employed on that occasion has and must have this single meaning. To hear these words is to understand them. They need no commentary. They speak for themselves. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Note the air of solemnity, with which the Lord Christ confers this dread prerogative on the apostles. Sin is an offense against God; and no one less than God can presume to forgive sin. Jesus Christ is God, and, before quitting earth for Heaven to sit forever at the right hand of His Father, Jesus Christ delegated this power to eleven men chosen from the multitude, and made ready for their mission by three years of intimate companionship with the wisdom and holiness of God. "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." These apostles, then, with St. Peter at their head, were constituted the custodians,

the depositaries of God's forgiveness, and dispensers of the grace of reconciliation. After Christ's Ascension, all power on earth to lift the sinner from the mire of sin was resident in these men, and in whatever other men they chose to make their helpers and successors. The apostles could not by themselves travel over the length and breadth of the world, to carry pardon wherever sin had entered in. Sin is as universal and widespread as human hearts, and it was certainly Christ's intention to supply mankind with a remedy as universal and widespread as the evil He meant to cure. Besides, the apostles were destined in the course of nature to die. Had this power to forgive sins died with them, what would have become of after ages, of our own age in particular? Are we freer from crime than the men and women of apostolic times? Far from it. The world of today is crusted thick with sin, and lower fallen in moral degradation than Sodom and Gomorrha. Christ, therefore, empowered His apostles to choose at their own discretion men worthy to continue the work of salvation, and authorized them to invest these men with their own dignity and prerogatives. And the apostles, after their dispersion, appointed bishops and priests everywhere; and everywhere entrusted to these bishops and priests the prerogative to forgive sin, first confided to themselves by the Master. And today when one of these bishops, with credentials from Pope Pius, the living representative of St. Peter, the vicar on earth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, ordains a priest, he breathes in the face of the candidate, and repeats the hallowed words first uttered by Our Lord, "Receive you the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Therefore, a priest of God, seated in the confessional, is the only man on earth able to pronounce with an authority infallibly ratified in Heaven the sentence of forgiveness; and mortal sins not forgiven in this way by God's priest must, morally speaking, remain unforgiven; must accompany the culprit to the throne of judgment, and must ultimately banish the culprit forever from the presence of God. And after the last day, every inhabitable place outside of Heaven will be a part of hell, and hell is the prison house of fire, the home of everlasting torments.

This is a hard truth, but none the less true for all that. God is the absolute owner of Heaven. He owes His creatures no favors, and, if rebellious men and rebellious women refuse to take advantage of the one means He puts at their disposal, the one plank He throws them after shipwreck, then these rebellious men and these rebellious women have only their own pride and obstinacy to blame, if they walk into hell. This is a hard truth; but, if Scripture means anything, there is no help for it. The Pope himself must kneel before a priest, and make his confession like the humblest and obscurest Catholic. Bishops and priests must in turn submit to the same humiliation. No power on earth can exempt Pope, or bishop, priest, or layman, from this unpleasant duty; and any soul overtaken by death with the stain of one mortal sin, not washed away in confession, is morally speaking outside the reach of God's mercy. I know not what fate God's sweet providence has in store for the multitudes of men and women, who today ridicule confession, and never dream of availing themselves of its advantages. I know, however, from my Bible that God, all merciful and kind though He be, peopled hell with armies of fallen angels for a single sin of thought, a momentary pride. I know from my Bible that God, who loves men beyond the telling, nevertheless sent death, and sorrow, and toil into the world for a single act of disobedience, done by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. I know from the expressive language of Catholic tradition, as much the word of God as Scripture itself, that, in case of mortal sin committed after Baptism, confession is the single plank thrown by indulgent Heaven to drowning sailors, and that contempt of this help means inevitable death. Perfect contrition can substitute for confession only where confession is impossible, only where ignorance of confession's necessity is entirely inculpable.

With all its wealth of comfort, this Sacrament of Penance has annoying features. Foremost among them are the declaration of one's sins to a priest, and the firm purpose of amendment. Confession is the telling of our sins to a duly authorized priest, for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness. It is an essential requisite for the forgiveness of any mortal sin committed after Baptism. It is often no easy task. It is disagreeable, it is mortifying, it is humiliating, it fills one with shame. But

no matter. It has to be done. God has said it, and God's word stands. The man who commits a mortal sin after Baptism cannot enter the Heaven prepared by God for His friends, unless he tells the priest that sin, and obtains from him absolution. The Catholic Church, the pillar and ground of truth, the visible representative of God on earth, is authority for this statement; and we Catholic sons of God and children of the true faith accept the statement with all its responsibilities, with all its disagreeable consequences. And God in kindness gives us the grace to go to confession. He condescends to our weakness, and in pity makes more or less easy what seems almost impossible to human nature. Outside of this sacrament, a man is obliged to reveal his crimes to nobody. Outside of this sacrament, a thief can hide his thefts, and parade before the world as an honest man; an adulterer can sin in secret, and pass among his friends as a decent citizen, devoted to his wife and family. Outside of this sacrament, a man may be a scoundrel in private, and pose before the public as the quintessence of gentility, the mirror of politeness. But there is one man in the world, with whom the thief, the adulterer, the society scoundrel, must have no secrets; and that one man is the priest.

Our Church in declaring this obligation is making a large demand on our faith; and our Church, unless she had the undoubted authority of God's word at her back, could never induce us to comply with her teaching. She derives the obligation from the plain words used by Jesus Christ in the institution of this sacrament, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Christ here confers on His priests a power plainly discretionary or judicial. Some sins they are to forgive, while they retain others. To duly exercise a power of this kind, priests must have knowledge of the sins, on which they are to pass sentence. Imagine a judge in a court of justice, who should have to acquit or condemn without hearing a word of testimony. And this is precisely what the priest would have to do, if the penitent were not obliged to accuse himself of his faults. Every confession is. therefore, a trial. The priest is judge. The penitent is at the same time criminal and witness. The penitent sues for pardon. God has commissioned the priest

to grant pardon in His name, if the dispositions of the penitent and the nature of the sins submitted justify this course. Unless the penitent comes before the priest, and makes a clear statement of all his sins, how can the priest form an opinion of his dispositions, how can the priest tell whether his sins are to be absolutely or conditionally pardoned, or not pardoned at all? It must be evident from this double prerogative of forgiving some sins and retaining others, that confession of sin is necessary. And the penitent's accusation of himself must be full, and honest, and true. No other witnesses can be called to correct his testimony. The priest, of course, is unable to determine with absolute certainty whether the penitent is in reality sorry for his sins, whether he is resolved to do better in the future, whether he is telling the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But God, whose agent the priest is, reads the secrets of men's hearts; and God in Heaven knows whether the penitent is sincere or not. If the penitent is sincere, God ratifies the sentence of pardon pronounced by the priest. If the penitent is insincere, God refuses to ratify the sentence, and the priest's absolution is nothing. Men can deceive the priest, they cannot deceive God. The priest necessarily supposes that the penitent is sorry, that he is determined to do better, and that he is telling the truth. It would be highly absurd for a penitent to act otherwise. To enter the confessional in any other disposition, would be to commit a new sin, a sacrilege, without deriving any profit whatever from confession.

The penitent, therefore, must make a full and plain statement of all the sins he remembers having committed since his last worthy confession. To wilfully conceal a mortal sin in confession is a sacrilege, a horrid crime in God's sight. If we intend to conceal a single mortal sin, we had better stay away from confession altogether. No sin is forgiven, when one is concealed. Besides, we must some day or other tell all our sins, this one included, if we want to go to Heaven. Shame of the kind is silly nonsense. The priest to whom we are talking will not be surprised or shocked at anything we tell him. He has already had crimes told him so terrible that you have no knowledge of their existence in the world. He is a man himself, not

an angel; and he knows how full the world is of wickedness, and how easy it is for men and women to fall into sin. Never, as you value your soul, omit from motives of shame a mortal sin in confession. Souls are today in hell, because they once yielded to this foolish and senseless feeling of shame.

God forgives no sin without contrition. This contrition is sorrow and hatred for sin. Our sorrow and hatred, if genuine and true, must make us resolve never again to be guilty of the thoughts, words and deeds that provoke these emotions. Contrition, therefore, to be complete, must have, along with sorrow and hatred, another and a very important element; one, too, sometimes lost sight of; and that element is a firm purpose of amendment. This firm purpose of amendment is a sincere and honest determination to never again, as far as lies in our power, fall into mortal sin of any kind. No vague, uncertain, general resolution will do. We must descend to particulars, we must promise God to put into effect all the suggestions the priest makes; to keep away from this or that companion, who has hitherto led us into sin; to stay far from the places and amusements, that we cannot without blame frequent. We know these companions, these places, these amusements; and we know how impossible it is for us long to remain holy, unless we avoid them; and away down in the bottom of our heart there is a voice telling us that we are insincere and dishonest with God, if we promise reform without fully making up our minds to break away from these companions, these places, these amusements. If a man given to drunkenness regularly visits bar-rooms, he cannot long remain sober; and he is not in earnest, when he promises God to behave himself. The young men or young women, who invariably sin against modesty, when in company with certain friends, are not truly sorry for their sins, if they seek the company of these wicked friends; and they have no intention whatever of abandoning their habits. Even after a firm purpose of amendment we can by accident fall into the same old sins. We are not angels or saints in Heaven, where sin is impossible; but we can at least be careful about avoiding occasions. We must ambition making our temptations as few in number as possible. If we had only such temptations to con-

tend with as God Himself sends us, grace would be always able to win the victory. We make trouble for ourselves by running into danger, and putting ourselves in predicaments for which God is nowise responsible, and God is not bound in justice or mercy to come to our assistance in such circumstances.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Epistle, 1 Peter 2; 21–25 *Gospel, St. John 10; 11–16*

"I am the good shepherd."
—St. John 10; 11.

In the Lord Christ's discourses members of His one true Church are often alluded to as sheep, Christ Himself is the good shepherd, and the Catholic Church is the fold into which God would have all His children gather. And here we can with profit pause to feast our souls on the inviting disguises Christ assumes in His intercourse with the people. In the Old Law Jehovah is always the God of might, Lord of the universe, sovereign judge of the living and the dead, a consuming fire, an avenger, a headsman walking in majesty and girded with the glare and noise of sudden bolt and roaring thunder. In the New Law of the Gospel Christ is the fountain of living water, the bread of life, the light of the world, the vine that grows the elect for grapes, the door to the fold, the hollow in the rock where the tired can find rest, and souls oppressed with heat can taste refreshing coolness. The heart need search no farther to feel content that love has usurped the place of fear in the government of God's people.

Christ inaugurated a new era in the economy of religion. The iron rod of dread, wielded for purposes of chastisement, without being laid aside, is kept well in the background; and God is become a shepherd, his crook wreathed with flowers, and mercifully bent to lift the weak over rough places, and rescue the headlong from destruction. Long years before His advent among men, the prophets looking down the ages saw Him walk the field of the world in the gentle guise of a shepherd, to inspire the nations with courage, and set the children of the promise free. Jeremias, captive to the thought, cries out, "I

am not troubled, following thee for my shepherd." 17, 16. Ezechiel, under the same spell, impersonates Jehovah, when he says, "I will set up one shepherd over my flock. He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd." 34, 23. All the types of the Messiah, the forerunners of Christ in the Old Law, were shepherds; Abel, and Jacob, and Joseph; Saul, and David, and Amos. Joseph instructed his brothers to describe themselves, when questioned by Pharaoh, as shepherds, "You shall say, we thy servants are shepherds, from our infancy until now, both we and our fathers." Gen. 46, 34. And, passing from type to reality, Christ abundantly acquitted Himself of all the duties incumbent on a good shepherd. He sets men in life, and keeps them there. From the cradle to the grave His providence is busy in our behalf. He nourishes our bodies with the fruits of the earth, our souls with the bread of His word, and the wine of His sacraments. He makes ready against our coming a table in Heaven, loaded with blessings and overflowing with delights. And He laid down His life for His sheep. He was no mercenary hireling. He stood His ground, when wolves of persecutors, their jaws dripping with blood, sought Him for prey. He stood between us and hell on Calvary's summit; and, to save us from the fury of demons, bared His sacred body to death, and welcomed all the tearing pain of His Passion. Christ, then, is our shepherd, we are His sheep, and the Catholic Church is the fold into which He would have all His children gather.

Today's Gospel is an appeal made by the Son of God to the chosen few in His audience, who valued His friendship as they valued life; and an open declaration of war against the Scribes and Pharisees, who shut their eyes tight against the light of God's grace, and, in spite of every miracle worked to win their favor, would not believe, would not love. It is, indeed, something of a return for all the trials and disappointments in the life of a priest, to look about and feel sure that Jesus Christ can still count friends among the sons and daughters of men, and that personal holiness is still cultivated in the hearts of men and women, intent on saving their souls at the cost of any sacrifice. But the Scribes and the Pharisees are not all dead yet; and it is a bitter thought, bitter even to tears, to think

that people we love, people otherwise amiable as the day is long, people for whose eternal welfare we would be willing to let burn our right hand, are flocking in troops to eternal ruin; and all because they will not hear the voice of our Lord and Shepherd Jesus Christ; all because, like the Scribes and Pharisees, they see only what is harsh and repulsive to human nature in the doctrine of the meekest and gentlest of men; all because they prefer the false ease and hollow contentment of error to the true and solid joy, that comes of doing violence to the passions and to self-love here, that the glory of the children of God may be theirs hereafter. I have seen them, you have seen them; and the person able to contemplate the scene without pain has a heart destitute of all the finer feelings of humanity. They are men and women struggling along in the path of unbelief, striving to silence the whispers of conscience by outward gayety and laughter, striving to affect an air of satisfaction and self-complacency, though they know deep down in their hearts that they are not where God wants them to be; striving to pretend they think that Heaven, hell and a future life are living realities, whereas they barely regard them dim and hazy somethings, they fondly hope will one day prove empty dreams. These are ashamed of their records, and would choose any fate, even complete annihilation, rather than stand after death before the bar of a just and angry God, with nothing in their hands but the ashes and the filth of sin. They are boys and girls, youths and maidens, who, fed on falsehood from their cradles, are walking the dark ways of their parents, and are fitting the bright eyes God meant to sparkle with grace, and the pretty faces God meant to redden with His love, for the company of demons and lost souls.

An hour given to the contemplation of what spiritual ruin and havoc are today being wrought in men's souls outside the one true fold, that separates the sheep of Christ from the sheep without, from the sheep with no shepherd but mercenary hirelings, is an hour full of terror, full of horror, full of pity. And yet there is no help for it! Truth can raise its voice as Christ raised His in the event today's Gospel commemorates. But the heart of man is free, the heart of man is a mystery of iniquity. And the heart of my next-door neighbor can cast out

the known truth, as did the hearts of the Scribes and Pharisees; and my next-door neighbor can say of the preacher, as said the Scribes and Pharisees of Our Lord Christ, "He hath a devil and is mad; why hear you him?" No living mortal can take his stand at the head of the long line of sinners, laughing and singing to their death, and push the crowd back. God could, perhaps, in another order of things do it; but, in giving these sinners a free will, and in promising to abide by the consequences of His gift, He has in a measure placed the salvation of obstinate sinners beyond the reach of His own omnipotence. He died on the Cross for them; He gave his life for even these sheep; but His blood is upon their heads, and will forever remain on their heads, as a signal for new tortures, in the abode of the wicked. The door to Christ's one true fold is ever open, and He has marked its location so plainly that all excuse is out of the question. In His last interview with His apostles, just prior to His ascension into Heaven, He resigned into St. Peter's hands His commission of visible Chief Pastor, and St. Peter's claim to the prerogative is stamped and sealed with divine authority in the twentieth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The office of Chief Pastor and the prerogatives attached to the same did not die with St. Peter. They live in the legitimate successors of St. Peter, and the legitimate successors of St. Peter are the Popes of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. The commission of Pope Pius XI to rule and govern the faithful is as divine a thing as the power bestowed on St. Peter, when Christ said to him, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs"; pastors bearing letters of recommendation from him are the only teachers who have a divine right to speak and to be heard; and a Catholic priest, when ordained by the hands of a Bishop, receives these letters duly sealed and drawn up.

I have no wish to exaggerate the dangers of remaining outside of the fold of Christ. I wish merely to insist on the truth; and furnish you with a plain statement of facts, that you may feel moved to pity friends in this sad condition, and fetch them by word and example nearer the truth, yea into the house of God. The sheep who are of Christ hear Christ's voice; and the voice of Christ, He says so Himself, is the voice of the

one true Church. The one true Church speaks in no uncertain terms to her children, and her voice sometimes calls us along rough and thorny ways, that poor self-love would prefer to avoid. For instance, there is her ordinance of Lent, of Sunday Mass, of yearly confession. She declares that Scripture is warrant for her belief that, without confession made to a priest, the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism is a moral impossibility. What fate has God's sweet providence in store for the multitudes of men and women, who today ridicule confession, and never dream of availing themselves of its benefits? I know not. I only know from my Bible that God, all merciful and kind though He is, peopled hell with armies of fallen angels for a single sin of thought, a momentary pride. I only know from my Bible that God, who loved and still loves men with a love no tongue can tell, nevertheless sent death, and sorrow, and toil into the world for a single sin of disobedience, perpetrated by Adam and Eve in the garden of Paradise.

God speed the day, when Christ will at last bring the other sheep that are not of this fold, and they shall hear His voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd. You can all contribute your little towards hastening the blessed time. Every single one of my hearers can reach with his influence the heart of some neighbor wandering in the darkness of error and unbelief. Every single one of my hearers can by word and example make the beauty of Catholic faith known in homes that the Catholic priest can never enter. And in the name of a common humanity, in the name of Christ's last prayer that His children may yet be one fold under one shepherd, I appeal to you all to do the work well. Let virtue be so prominently stamped in your every word and action, that even enemies may by force of your good example come to love the truth. Christ knows His sheep, and the sheep of Christ know Him for their shepherd. And, if our lives were what they should be, our neighbors would know us for sheep of Christ, and would soon be consumed by a desire to share the happy privilege with us. Therefore, take up the good work of preaching Catholic truth by the example of a holy life, and continue the good work unto the end, that Christ may have no difficulty in knowing

you on the last day, and separating you from the crowd. And may the evening of that last day find us close to our Shepherd's side, ready to begin on the morrow an eternity in the green fields of God's love and felicity without end.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE PATRONAGE OF SAINT JOSEPH

Epistle, 1 Peter 2; 11–18 *Gospel, St. John 16; 16–22*

"Joseph, her husband, being a just man."
—St. Matthew 1, 19.

The feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph was instituted in the Church for a double purpose; to place the entire Catholic world under the special protection of this powerful saint, and to pay another very special tribute of respect to God's own foster-father. Pharaoh of old commended all Egypt to the care of our saint's namesake, and that Joseph saved Israel from the horrors of famine. Our St. Joseph spent his manhood's energies toiling to procure nourishment for the tender body of the Child Jesus, strengthening it for the hour of trial on Calvary, and shaping it for the tabernacles on our altars, where till time is no more it shall save men's souls from the frightful torments of spiritual hunger, and death by the starving process of sin. Devout clients have repeatedly experienced the rare value of St. Joseph's intercession in time especially of temporal need. Jesus obeyed him on earth as a parent, and in Heaven relationships are purified and strengthened, not annihilated or destroyed. After the Child's birth Joseph fulfilled in His regard all the offices of a most tender and attentive father; and Jesus rewards abundantly every token of affection rendered His friend of friends. This father's Son is omniptent, the world's absolute owner; and a word from His father is law to this Son. No request presented at the throne of mercy, and duly endorsed by St. Joseph, can fail of effect. We may not know why, we may not understand how; but whatever favor asked through St. Joseph is refused, we are better off without it, we are better off

without it. God knows why, God understands how; and that is enough. I pray God to do me no kindness, apt later on to prove my ruin. I pray God to lift from my shoulders no cross, if my salvation depends on its being carried right to the journey's end. Burn, cut, kill us here; but, God, receive us into thy Kingdom, when this mocking life is over. "Honor the king's father," is an old adage, and has its practical application here. St. Joseph's rank among the saints of God cannot be for a moment doubted or disputed. In the order of saint-hood he stands next to the Virgin Mother of God, his lawful spouse; and between her and the Godhead no creature intervenes. We Catholics know well from our catechism the position he filled in the Saviour's regard. Mary was really and truly the Mother of Jesus. The God-man had no human father in the full and complete sense of the word. The Holy Ghost assumed the part of father, and the birth of Jesus was from this point of view a miracle. Joseph was never more than foster-father to the Child, bearing towards Him only what relations the rich patron bears to the boy or girl he adopts. The teaching of our faith is clear in this matter, and to entertain any other opinion would be wrong, nothing short of heresy.

God calls no one to a position of trust or honor in His Kingdom, without at the same time equipping him with abundant graces and means to meet its requirements. He confided to St. Joseph's keeping all that He held sacredest on earth. He commissioned St. Joseph the keeper, the guardian, and the support of His two most precious treasures, a well beloved and only begotten Son and that Son's Immaculate Mother. Our saint's virtue, therefore, must have been of so conspicuous a kind as to attract God's notice, and fix His attention in a singular way. Grace builds on nature; and, before his selection for the twofold dignity, his blameless life must have pledged his worthiness to become the virgin husband of his virgin wife, and the foster-father to God. God had the world to choose from, He chose St. Joseph, who, therefore, must have quite come up to God's ideals of a man, a husband and a father. Divine motherhood sets the Blessed Virgin Mary at the head and front of women and men. His fatherhood sets St. Joseph at the head and front of men. No man can aspire higher; but, with

Heaven's help and a large measure of good will, every man can aim as high, and hope with reason nearly to reach the mark.

Scripture writes the epitaph of this illustrious saint in one short word, "He was a just man"; and in God's own appreciation justice is everything. It is holiness crystallized; it is in God's dictionary the one word that says every other word; it is the mother-virtue, and her children, no matter what their names or other accidental differences, carry her likeness in their faces, and awaken everywhere memory of this queen-goddess of the saints, justice, justice, justice. In the poor language at our disposal, we call justice that habitual phase of mind and heart, eternally ready to render to everyone his due. It comprehends within its wide scope every conceivable virtue, it excludes every conceivable sin. It is a disposition from which no virtue is absent, in which no vice or sin has part. We are under obligations to God, to self and the neighbor; and the fulfillment of these manifold obligations constitutes justice or sanctity. Every new relation we assume in life brings in its train a new set of claims, and widens our field for the exercise of justice. But, no matter what our condition in society, whether single men, or husbands, or fathers, we can discover in St. Joseph a heroic model of all the virtues, a just man by excellence. A short study, then, of his conduct in the threefold capacity of individual, husband of Mary, and father of Jesus, must prove encouraging, useful and instructive.

And first of all, in his dealings with God St. Joseph is a man of sublime faith. Faith is the tonic that nerves men to the heroism of duty, and faith is the twin shadow of every virtue. St. Joseph's faith was of no common order. It was of the kind that moves mountains, and draws angels down from Heaven. It was a faith well tried in the fires of tribulation, welded round and strong by all the crushing weight of heavy misfortune. It saw God's Providence in the cold and poverty of Bethlehem's stable, and was content. It adored God's wisdom in the flight into Egypt, and was silent. It wondered, no doubt, at an omnipotent God in full retreat from a weak enemy; it experienced a shock at the apparently senseless haste enjoined by the angel; it was puzzled at the years seemingly wasted in the obscurity of a strange land by the Messiah of Israel; but it

never for an instant wavered, it never raised a dissenting or complaining voice; it went down to Egypt, not knowing how or why, but cheerful with that trust never yet disappointed. And this faith is the crying need of our lives. With this one lesson learned, we could close the book, and dream of Heaven till burial. Could we once make as complete and honest a surrender of ourselves to faith as St. Joseph's, we could straightway count eternal blessedness our own, and our hope should never be shaken. Oh, we all have the faith. It is in our very bones and blood. We feel ready, like the martyrs among our ancestors, to die for it. But faith in us is not what it was in St. Joseph. In us its edge has been somewhat worn by contact with the casualties of life. It needs renewal, its eyes need to be purged clean of the dust-motes of worldliness. It stays too far in the background to be of assistance in an hour of need. We do not see God everywhere. Heaven and hell at times take back seats in our thoughts. Virtue appears in rags, with which the written word of God never clothed her, and vice,—well, vice parades before us in garments that belong to virtue. We have our moments of weakness, the best of us. It is doing God no violence to introduce Him into politics, into law, medicine or business. He belongs everywhere, as in virtue of His attribute of immensity He is everywhere. He will have a part in our triumphs as well as in our failures. He wants to be with us while we are living, as well as when we are dying. Sin is constructive abandonment of faith, sinners are subject to momentary lapses from faith; and we never yet offended God, without for the moment playing false to the faith, of which in times of quiet we are so proud and so fond.

This spirit of faith is the secret of sanctity. "My just one liveth by faith," Heb. 10, 38, is the formula adopted by St. Paul. Therefore, recognizing faith's supreme importance, we must lift our minds from the depths of worldliness to that higher plane, where the sun of truth alone shines, where men see things as they are. We must pray God for that habit of faith, which never hides behind a cloud, but always beats full and strong on the eyes of the saints. We must often pray God to save us from our worse selves, to kill within us that accursed power we have of forgetting Him, and fastening our minds on

trifles. Holiness is a habit. Holiness is this habit of faith. We must agree with ourselves to henceforth model our conduct along the lines of faith, not along the beaten track of sensuality and selfishness. We must make anew our profession of allegiance to the instincts of faith, and determine always to have a thought of faith in our plans and undertakings. With this habit of faith secured, acts of the different virtues will take care of themselves. Humility, charity, patience, all the virtues, must by a kind of happy necessity flourish in the heart dependent for its activity on faith and faith alone. Faith is incompatible with sin. Where faith is what it ought to be, virtue is the only logical line of conduct. The trouble is that we are dishonest with ourselves, or terribly inconsistent. We profess loyalty to the faith, without realizing that we are disloyal to it every hour of the day. Take these few instances. It is of faith, and we sincerely believe, that a single venial sin is a worse evil than disease, and death, and a world's collapse. And yet we complacently go on from early morning till late at night multiplying our venial sins. It is of faith, and we sincerely believe, that our merit here is the measure of our future glory; and yet we go on year after year totally indifferent to the number of good works we perform, and intent only on avoiding mortal sin. Were we wide awake to the whispers of faith, thoroughly possessed of its instincts, we should begin to be saints tomorrow. We fail, and we fail lamentably to realize in practical everyday life the faith we profess; and as a consequence we pitch our endeavors no higher than bare escape from hell, when we ought to be planning for higher and higher seats in Heaven. Meditation, sober reflection, is the one thing wanting. We are the slaves of prejudice, that has been years growing; and to shake off our sloth, to go straight to God, like St. Joseph, we must think, and think often in our hearts of what faith has to say concerning every minor detail of life.

With regard to the married life of Joseph and Mary, Scripture-history is sparing of details; but the few facts recorded are full of instruction. If married women shaped their lives according to the blessed model left by the Virgin Mary, if husbands in their relations with their wives imitated the holy example of St. Joseph, our families would reflect in their bosoms

the peace of Heaven, our republic would be a paradise of delights, and our Church would be a collection of souls predestined to an eternity of bliss after a period of quiet happiness here on earth. Disorder in the family is the root of all human curses. Wicked fathers and wicked mothers are responsible before God for much of the crime that afflicts our race. Children are entrusted to their tender mercies from the beginning, and necessarily learn from their conduct and their lips lessons sure in the nature of things to color the whole future trend of their lives. A quarrelsome, irreligious husband cannot rear children for Heaven. A husband given to viler habits, too repulsively ugly even to be named, must poison the very blood of his offspring, and light up in their members a fire unquenchable here, unquenchable hereafter. On the contrary, a husband of St. Joseph's stamp, a man of piety and prayer, a man of industrious habits, a man devoted to his family, is coöperating with the growth of God's Kingdom on earth, is securing for himself a fame more enduring than monuments, the benediction of generations that shall rise up and call him blessed. A home presided over by piety is the vestibule to Heaven.

Prayer is a sovereign remedy for the little differences likely to arise between husband and wife. And yet, in spite of this circumstance, many a Catholic husband has recourse to every means but prayer, when difficulties start up. Many a Catholic husband, when face to face with trouble, flies into a passion, assails his wife with his tongue, and renders what patience and prayer could have easily cured a subject of lifelong annoyance. St. Joseph was once attacked by doubts concerning the Blessed Virgin's faithfulness. But he instituted no quarrel, he made no long speeches. He prayed, he trusted in God; and God sent an angel from Heaven to instruct St. Joseph in the mystery of the Incarnation, and free him from disturbing thoughts. Every year at the appointed season of the Pasch, the Holy Family left Nazareth to journey to Jerusalem for prayer and sacrifice, according to the law imposed on God's people; a lesson to fathers to see to it that their children acquit themselves with fidelity of their duties to God, night and morning prayers, Sunday Mass and catechism, confession and communion. Parents, forgetting this example, are often much to blame for the ingrati-

tude that embitters their old age, and drags their grey hairs down to the grave. They begin by teaching their children to despise the laws of God and of His Church. They accustom them to familiarity with vice and disobedience. They make light in their presence of the need of prayer, of Sunday Mass, of every religious observance. They have little or no respect for God's service themselves, and they are at small pains to conceal their impiety. Faith is practically dead in their bosoms. They are Catholics in name only. How can such parents expect from their children any return but ingratitude, contempt and hatred? They have themselves taught these children to trample in the dust man's sacredest obligations, his duties to God; and children are apt learners, when wickedness is the lesson set them. Only a miracle of God's grace can enable such children to rise superior to their early training, and serve God with honest and ready hearts. When such miracle is wanting, they rapidly improve on the crimes of their parents. They lose even the name of Catholics. They do violence to conscience a hundred times a day, they make no account whatever of God or Church. And the soul, accustomed to steady contempt of God, is going to experience no great trouble, when called on to sacrifice filial affection to selfishness. Such a soul is dead to finer instincts, and loses with God's love all sentiments of filial piety. Industry is another quality of the good husband. He glories in toiling for them that sit closest to his heart. He welcomes the fatigue and heat of the day for the fond and affectionate greeting its close brings. To support the Holy Family, St. Joseph, king as he was, with the royal blood of David in his veins, stooped to the mean and laborious occupation of carpenter. To procure food for Mary and the Child, this descendant of Israel's kings contentedly yielded up the sceptre of authority to wield in its place the tools of his trade, the plane, the saw and the hammer. Where love holds sway, there is no work; for all the drudgery of work is transformed into love's roseate idleness. St. Joseph's attachment to home must have been absorbing. Mary and the Child Jesus were company enough for him; and leaving home must have been like stepping from Paradise into a desert. Heaven began for Joseph before he died. Heaven is God's presence; and

Joseph enjoyed God's presence within the narrow precincts of his humble home. And Catholic husbands, guilty of frequent and prolonged absence from the family circle, are doing a heavy wrong to their wives, their sons and daughters.

And oh, the lessons fathers can learn from the life of St. Joseph in the difficult art of rearing their children! Catholic homes ought to be built on Nazareth for a model, and Catholic fathers ought to love, and educate, and watch over their children as Joseph loved, and educated, and watched over his divine Son Jesus. He was always with the growing Child. The shepherds on Christmas night found him with Him, and the kings from the East. He made the journey to Egypt in Joseph's fond arms. And oh, Catholic fathers, Catholic mothers, keep your sons and daughters at home. Keep close to them, keep them close to you. Love, when solid and true, cannot long endure the absence of its object. Love is uneasy, when the person we love is away. Make the family circle so attractive for the young that when among strangers they may sigh for it, and long to again enjoy its pleasures. The streets are the devil's headquarters, they are the workshops of vice; and many a boy, many a girl have been driven by thoughtless parents, by cruel parents, to seek a refuge from their sorrows in the streets. Children are not always wholly to blame for the unnatural feelings they entertain towards their parents. Fathers and mothers, who lament the ingratitude of their children, are in many cases reaping exactly what they sowed. Young hearts need sympathy; and, if they find none at home, they are bound to seek it elsewhere to their own destruction. Make home what it ought to be, a place as sacred almost as the church of God, the resting place of peace, piety and happiness; and children will love home as another Heaven, children will love their parents as the representatives of God. Jealously guard the young against bad company. Diligent parents make it a duty to know with what friends their sons and daughters spend the evening. The mind of a good mother is a constant prey to anxiety, when a son or daughter is long out of her sight. The Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph once lost the Child Jesus, and how they sorrowed till they found Him! They sought for Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.

travelled back to Jerusalem, and after three days' search found Him in the temple. Finally, the Evangelist sums up the whole hidden life of the Lord Christ, His first thirty years, in one word, "He was subject to them." He was obedient to His father and mother, to Joseph and Mary. Parents, God has conferred on you the plenitude of His own authority. You have a divine right to the obedience of your children, and you are doing God a heavy wrong, if you foolishly allow your sons and daughters to despise your authority. You are empowered by Heaven even to use the rod, when severe measures are necessary; and you are responsible for whatever harm results from neglect of chastisement or correction. Punishment, administered with kindness and patience, never yet alienated the affections of a child; and children are wide awake to the fact that they sometimes need to be severely dealt with. If women already entered into the sacred state of marriage shaped their lives according to the blessed example left by the Virgin Mary, if husbands in their relations with their wives imitated the conduct of St. Joseph, our families would reflect in their bosoms the peace of Heaven, our republic would be a paradise of delights, our Church would be a collection of souls, predestined to an eternity of bliss in Heaven after a short or long period of quiet happiness on earth.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Epistle, St. James 1; 17–21 *Gospel, St. John 16; 5–14*

"Sorrow hath filled your heart."
—St. John 16, 6.

Today's gospel forms part of the sermon preached by Christ to the apostles on the eve of His Passion. A few verses before, He is represented promising them their full measure of persecution, expulsion from the synagogues, and violence as extreme as murder. Small wonder that sorrow filled their hearts! During the three years of public life, as they marched at His side, they gathered comfort and courage from His lips and His eyes. Witnesses of His miraculous power over death and disease, they had learned to despise the one and the other. They had begun to feel that in His company they were secure against all the ills of life. They moved in a charmed circle, into which human ills could not enter. They had in His near presence a solace for every doubt, a cure for every pain. Now He talks of a journey to His Father, of a period when they shall see Him no more. He intimates that the world will let loose in His absence all its fury, and do them wrongs impossible while He stood between them and harm. A gloomy prospect for sure to succeed to that picture of glory they had often dreamed, with Christ seated on a throne at the head of the universe, and themselves princes and nobles in the kingdom. The apostles would not have been men had they not bowed their heads in fear, had they not felt their hearts fail within them at this startling revelation. Of course, hope borrowed light and life from Christ's promise of a future Comforter. But Peter, and James, and John, and the rest knew little of the Holy Ghost and His workings. Jesus was their all! They hated to exchange their present security for the bitterness of troubles, and trials, and

death, even though some being of mystery were bound to come later to their rescue. And they were sad with the sorrow that human hearts always borrow from impending and inevitable danger. With Jesus at their side, they felt themselves a match for the world! With Jesus gone, they felt helpless as the child robbed of a father's strong arm in the hour of need.

But their fears were vain, and their sorrow was empty. After Pentecost, after the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, took up residence in their souls, they were capable of a heroism never betrayed during the life of Christ. They left Judea for the four corners of the earth. They dared Christ's enemies to the teeth, they boldly told these enemies that they had a mission to fulfil, and were determined to fulfil it in the face of death; and to a man they laid down their lives on the altar of constancy and faith. They then understood in a way denied them on the night of the Last Supper, that Jesus in Heaven is as strong to protect and save as Jesus on earth; that, though at times He withdraws His visible presence from them, He never quite abandons His servants. And this is one of the morning's lessons! When we are at our best, when we are actually tired from the struggle and ready to faint away and yield, Christ often seems to sleep oblivious of our sad plight, He seems to go journeys to the other side of the world, and look steadfastly away from us. But He is then nearer than we imagine. His Comforting Spirit, in the shape of divine grace, is within us; and will lead us, as He led the apostles, through death to life, through sorrow to joy, through earth's desert waste of affliction to Heaven's green fields of bliss and endless contentment. Courage, then, is wrapped up in the thought that our friend of friends loves to the end, that it is not yet all up with us when things seemingly go wrong. Our Captain rises to Heaven, to send His little army reinforcements. He hides Himself at times, only to fill His soldiers with a new longing for His presence; and He mercifully allows us momentarily to lose Him, that we may seek Him in the temple and find Him, only to keep closer to His side forever after. Sin itself should not discourage us! If we fall tomorrow, we must rise again; and the fruit of many an honest effort will be final perseverance and the blessedness of the saints.

We might find a reason for the sorrow that filled the hearts of the apostles in their affection for the Master. Before Pentecost these apostles were more like lovers than soldiers. They became men of war only after Pentecost, after fire had tipped their tongues and warmed their hearts. And in this personal love of Jesus we must imitate them. It is the first step towards holiness and zeal. It must operate to clothe our naked souls with virtue, to inspire us with a hatred for sin, to awaken within us an enthusiasm for the coming of the Kingdom. It is everywhere characteristic of love to foster and encourage resemblances between the two parties to the transaction, to eliminate traits provocative of displeasure in one or other, and to consecrate the lover guardian and champion of the object of his affections. In the matter, therefore, of saintship, love, a personal love of the Saviour, is key to the whole situation. The apostles were ready for the transformation wrought in their lives by the coming of the Holy Ghost, because sorrow filled their hearts with news of the Lord Christ's departure. This one incident floods the meeting in the supper-room with light. It argues a passion in the hearts of the apostles for the Son of God, it proves them captive to His cause, and candidates for the glory of martyrdom. They were not indifferent to His going and coming, that curse of our mediocrity in virtue. His near presence was the central sun of their very existence; and, when He threatened its withdrawal, they looked forward to an eclipse, with all its attendant darkness, and sadness, and fear. No other friend in the universe could in their regard fill the gap His going occasioned; and, robbed of His comfort, they could promise themselves only the abandonment, that distresses the heart-roots of an orphan. Their hearts were not divided. Christ was their single love and, with the Lord Christ gone, life lost all semblance of a blessing; to live ceased to be a pleasure, and they longed to die. He was the ideal of their honest minds, as He was the idol of their fond hearts; and at the very announcement of His approaching departure they are overwhelmed with sorrow. With the small measure of constancy at their disposal, they had for three years admired, even if they failed to imitate, His consummate virtue; and the history of those three years, though scattered with reproaches for instances of

human weakness, never breathes a suspicion of anything but intense, personal love of the Master.

Their love for Jesus was not like ours, an impersonal, abstract, divided sort of thing; and their love bore fruits, to which ours is an utter stranger. Are we beside the mark, when we acknowledge that the Lord God can disappear from the horizon of our lives for days and weeks at a time, without occasioning discomfort? How many among us have escaped the shameful experience of sin? How many nurse an uncontrollable grief, such as filled the hearts of the apostles, between confession and confession? And yet sin bears in on the soul the very calamity the twelve dreaded, when Jesus said, "And now I go to Him that sent me." Sin entails loss of Jesus; and, were we the men of faith we ought to be, were we the lovers we ought to be, sin would be forever barred entrance to our hearts, or wept as the most serious of misfortunes. There are souls that dead to divine love they know not the full significance of their loss, when Jesus disappears. Neither do they care. They are of too dull a spiritual sense to miss the God of holiness gone from their side. They are engrossed by business. They belong body and soul to the world, and the world is selfishness, and the world is opposed to Christ. A man's case is hopeless, when Jesus can slip away without awakening regret by His absence. Such a man by swift degrees grows accustomed to estrangement from God, he worships idols, he fastens his heart on forbidden loves, and, like the patient unaware of his malady, is absolutely beyond the reach of medicine.

But monsters of this sort seldom find their way into assemblies of the faithful. Our audiences are other. They are made up of the tepid, the careless, the negligent. These men know the loss they sustain in the departure of Jesus, but they lack the energy to remedy the thing. They miss Him sorely, and endeavor to forget their discomfort by the indulgence of ease. They fall away from their old fervor, drop out of the ranks of the saints. They argue themselves into the belief that, after all, the watchfulness over self called for by a life in perpetual touch with the Saviour exerts too great a strain, and life at a short distance from His reproving eye comes in the nature of a release from annoyance. During their early years holiness

was attended with small or no bitterness. Now comes a change of appetite, and they are going to just taste, even if they never eat, the feast set by the Philistines. Weekly yields place to monthly communion, evenings of calm spent at the church in the midst of incense and benediction change to nights tediously drawn out in the red glare of society, the noise of gossip and play, from which conscience does not always emerge unharmed. Sodality goes, visits to the foot of the King's throne go, and Jesus is away off in the dim distance, a rejected suitor, getting ready to weep the loss of another friend, another heart, another immortal soul.

O deluded souls, awake to the crisis in your lives! Put on that love for Jesus, which in the case of the apostles vested their loss of Him with all the characteristics of a calamity, able to fill their hearts with sorrow. Cultivate that personal love of the Saviour, which, brooking no rival, sets Him on a throne and worships at no other shrine. Forget, if you will, that He is the God of majesty, the Sovereign Judge, the Lord of the universe; but remember that He is your friend of friends, as greedy for the love of your tired and worn heart, as if He had no other object in the world on which to lavish the wealth of His affections. Strip Him in thought of all the dread attributes that surround divinity, lose sight of His Kingship, and feast your eyes on the tenderness of the man. See Him a babe in the manger, see Him giving her son to the widow of Naim, see Him raising Lazarus from the dead. Adore Him, God of the Sacred Heart, with hands uplifted in prayer for the salvation of His children, with arms outstretched to welcome sons and daughters, weary with labor and heavy burdened, to His warm embraces.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Epistle, St. James 1; 22–27 *Gospel, St. John 16; 22–30*

"Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."
—St. John 16, 24.

Theologians recognize in this and kindred texts a solemn assurance on the part of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ that the tremendous gift of final perseverance can be had for the asking. Prayer, therefore, made in the proper spirit and at the proper interval, can secure for us the crown and guerdon of our hopes. For final perseverance is in the nature of things a passport to the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Catholic, whose hopes fall short of a happy eternity in the bosom of God, is, to say the least, improvident. The world may say what it will, and the advance agents of hell may represent their wares as they will, it still remains true, and it shall forever remain true, that a man's joy will be full only in Heaven. We were born to be happy. Happiness is satisfied contentment, and nothing here on earth can quite fill the heart. Wealth cannot do it, pleasure cannot do it, and our hearts are straitened till they swim in beatitude. A day of rich profits may possibly excite a momentary thrill of satisfaction in some prosperous merchant's breast, a night of revelry and sin may possibly raise to distraction the drooping spirits of some base slave to baser passions; but the reverses of some succeeding day will paralyze the thrill, and the remorse of some succeeding night will hack sin's victim with a two-edged sword; and the greedy merchant and the beast of voluptuousness will at last bear bitter witness to the truth that the world is a liar, and that the agents of hell are gay deceivers. But the man of God, the Catholic intent on his duty, can with thankfulness receive the much or little kind Heaven vouchsafes, can with security enjoy what intervals

Providence makes free from pain, without any disturbing after-effects, because he keeps securely locked within his bosom the hope of at last reaching his true home, and because he stands ready to sacrifice health, wealth, yea life itself on the altar of duty and virtue. He knows with Job of old that his Redeemer liveth, and he knows that these his eyes of flesh shall one day be sated with the vision of God in glory. Christ in next Sunday's gospel warns His disciples not to be scandalized at the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the just, at the successes of their triumphant oppressors and the persecution they must themselves undergo.

And we have need of the warning. We are no better than David, and the problem once caused him deep concern, the problem once cost him a struggle with faith and logic, that runs through the whole of the seventy-second psalm. It requires a certain amount of moral courage to face the difficulty, presented by the unequal distribution of good things, at present in force in the universe. Most men very sensibly agree with themselves to regard the whole thing only another of the unsearchable mysteries God uses to confound the wisdom of the proud. They make a large call on their faith, and without understanding, without attempting to understand, what motives shaped Providence in the matter, they resolutely abide by facts, and accept their lot with patience, whether it be cast in pleasant or unpleasant places, whether they live in alleys or on avenues, whether they beg or scatter wealth in charity. God's wisdom is at the back of creation, and the thought is a key to the situation. A fond Father fashions the fate of His sons, and to know this is enough. Not a sparrow flutters his life out in the grass without his Maker's permission; and, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Others with the Royal Prophet appeal to death for a solution of the mystery. They go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning the last end of the wicked. Death is a universal leveller of prejudices and distinctions. It is a magic rue for the eyes of the mind, and it teaches lessons that can be learned in no other school. It is an open book illumined by the light of all time, it is a preacher that talks with the tongues of the ages in a language that all must understand. The forward chapters in

every life's history are wonderfully varied and different. This man acquires wealth, that man journeys through life with poverty for inseparable companion. This man wins a world's applause, that man passes his years in the obscurity of a farm, where no one but wife and children knows his name. This man's life is full of incident, full of adventure, full of romance; that man's life is a dull, silent round of waking, eating and sleeping, devoid of noise and activity, devoid of passion's rise and fall, a stranger to alternations of hope, and love, and hate. But the last chapter in every man's life is the same. Death closes the book. Death writes the *Finis*. Death is the end; and the last page of every man's history is the same, a bottle of medicine, a glass, and a spoon, skull and cross-bones, and the figure of an old man grey-bearded and bent, with a scythe in one hand, and an empty hour-glass in the other. A man's soul is his only immortal possession, the one element of his being that necessarily lives forever; and, when face to face with death, this truth dances with fearful vividness before his eyes. His wealth he must leave behind, his old pleasures are no solace, his honors are of little worth in this supreme moment. He is on tiptoe waiting to be ushered into the presence of the God of mystery.

But men are slaves to the present, and death seems sometimes too far off to make a vivid impression. There must be some other way of satisfying ourselves that, even apart from death, the good things of earth are not in reality the blessings they appear. Wealth, pleasure, honor are the components of what a blind world reckons supremest bliss, and they are the three concupiscences, from which St. John warns away the sons of God. They must hide somewhere in their being a forbidding ugliness able to fill with disgust them that see and understand. And first of all, it is an open truth, but one well worth remembering, that wealth, and pleasure, and honor are not unmixed evils, and that poverty, and pain, and dishonor are not unmixed goods. This is so true that the good resident in wealth, and pleasure, and honor can sometimes wear so attractive an appearance, that it drives men grown grey in God's service to throw duty to the winds, and trample under foot obligations the most sacred. The evil resident in poverty, pain and dishonor can

sometimes assume proportions able to frighten saints away from the Cross. Whatever spiritual writers may feel obliged to say to the contrary, however true it may be that the world is full of sorrow, and can boast of only hollow honor, unsatisfying pleasure and worry-breeding wealth, it remains an indisputable fact that people in the world contrive to enjoy a measure of mirth with which they are quite content, deriving from the pastimes we deny ourselves an amount of satisfaction able to put them on the best of terms with themselves and their surroundings. No good can come of lying to ourselves. In electing the Catholic code of morals, we have made irrevocable choice of a state of life infinitely galling to human nature. To enter the arena in any other sentiment is to make a serious mistake; and to weigh the worth of wealth, and pleasure, and honor in any other disposition is to entirely miss the state of the question. Even if in choosing the poverty, pain and contempt of Christ we made a mistake in our appreciation of the world's goods, there is the oath we swore when we renewed our baptismal vows, and we cannot retrace our steps. But we made no mistake; and the following brief considerations can confirm us in the truth, can make it part and parcel of our mind's fibre.

Wealth is property in land or money, and is desirable only inasmuch as it secures to its owner certain purchasable advantages. It is an open highway to pleasures of body, pleasures of mind, and even honor, as the term goes among men, is at its beck and call. But that's all! In these few words we have run the gamut of wealth's power. We can search till doomsday, and we shall find that from a worldly point of view riches have no other uses. We are concealing nothing from ourselves, the picture is spread out before us, and, to even brighten its colors, we can for the present neglect the shades, and examine some of the livelier details. It is nice, no doubt, to ride around in a coach and four, to dress in the latest style, to have a retinue of servants at one's command, to sip cool drinks in summer and warm drinks in winter, to partake of only such dishes as the palate fancies, to be familiar at all times with the jolly sound of coin, to have hired ministrels lend the soothing influence of music to a tired head or a tired mind, to enjoy the intoxication of flattery, to have men bow and make

way for you as you pass through the street. Why, of course, it's nice. But the picture has another side. We need hardly pause to count the few mortals thus lavishly smiled on by fortune. They would not fill a large city. We need not allude to the small respect death has for wealth, and the cruelty with which it intervenes. Dives died and was buried in hell. This shortness of enjoyment broods like a common curse over everything human, and it is no heavier on wealth than on pleasure and honor. First and foremost, we can hear the still and solemn voice of the Lord Christ coming down the ages, "Woe to you rich! It is easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle! Blessed are the poor!" Christ is God, and wastes no threat. He cursed wealth with a fearful anathema. Christ is our Leader. We cannot stumble, when we follow Him; and for our instruction He was born in a cheerless stable, He died naked on the cross, He was wrapped for burial in a winding-sheet humanely lent by a casual friend. Can we be far wrong in cutting loose from greed of wealth? Hardly! Why, men under the spell of these terrifying words ought to rush to their homes, drag their plunder into the street, and pile it up for common use, like the Christians of St. Peter's time. But, apart from the Master's words of warning, pagan philosophers, long before His advent into the world, recognized the incompatibility of wealth and virtue. Not a few of them threw away their riches, the more entirely to give themselves to wisdom and righteousness. And we, standing in the full light of revelation, have motives never dreamt of in old philosophy. Life on earth is a period of probation, a warfare; and life only half fulfils its purpose, if not sown thick with buffets and violence. The rich suffer no violence. Their money secures them against discomfort. They walk a broad highway, with fields of flowers on either side; and the road to hell is somewhere so described. Wealth, besides, carries along with it this other and heavier curse. It is the ready instrument of crime in all of crime's revolting shapes. It can procure murder, it can procure fraud, it can procure the destruction of families, it can procure indulgences and excesses too vile even to mention. And it is not in the nature of man, when sorely tried by temptation, not to stretch out his hand to things forbidden, so ready at his dis-

posal. Wealth is the root of all evil. Every imaginable species of sin grows on this bush, and the first of the eight beatitudes, recommending poverty of spirit, is the starting point of holiness and the journey's end.

And what of pleasure? Well, like wealth it is not an unmixed evil. To preserve our treasure of purity, we must pluck out our eyes, we must cut off our hands, we must abhor friendships that lend to life half its pleasantness. We are men, and we are ventured into the territory of the angels; and our enemy has many unpleasant ways of reminding us that we are not yet divested of these bodies of corruption and sensuality. And passion will be a constant menace to purity, till these bodies are borne out and buried. It is a hard fight, and a long one, and we invite defeat, if we go into it without the armor of God's grace. To gather strength, we must often sit and listen to that hymn the virgins sing in Heaven, we must pray God for assistance, and arm ourselves with principles that are strong and principles that are true. Let us say nothing of the esteem in which Christ held this virtue of purity. The virgin disciple with his head on the Master's bosom at the Last Supper, the Virgin Mother with her hand on the foot of the Cross, are reminders enough. Let us rather search diligently till we find in pleasure what elements render it less desirable than the purity it threatens. It must hide somewhere in its being some such elements. Apart even from the authority of Christ, reason ought to be able to discover unattractive traits able to disgust us with pleasure. It is a nail in Christ's hand, and it ought to hurt us as much as it hurt Him. If we once reason ourselves into such a disposition that every sensation of pleasure awakens within us a corresponding and livelier sensation of pain, we can hardly make a mistake in choosing. And, until pleasure inflicts upon us positive pain, until self-denial reveals to us more allurements than self-indulgence, we are in perpetual danger of falling down dead at the shrine of unholy pleasure. The most prominent characteristic of pleasure is its shortness of duration. Men never tire of wealth, they seldom tire of honor; but masters in the art of enjoying themselves, graduates in the school of the passions, rack their brains in a mad endeavor to feed desire with new dishes. The inexperienced sometimes

think that a certain step forward in the field of pleasure will constitute a limit, beyond which they will not aspire to go. They foolishly fancy that this or that gratification will induce sleep, and put them in quiet possession of perpetual rest. But they are sadly mistaken. If they take the step, they will find to their cost, that satisfaction, and peace, and calm are farther off than ever, that new wants spring up in place of the old ones, and that life is all too short to arrive at the consummation of their hopes. All that glitters is not gold. The pleasure resident in sin is short-lived. It cloys with use. It makes hungry and thirsty without ever satisfying. It seasons bodies for the fires of hell. It covers men with shame, and robs them of self-respect. It unfits them for the company of the honest and heroic. The joys of virtue are honorable, and sweet, and lasting. God is with the virtuous, to comfort them and flood their souls with peace. He is with them at prayer, with them at work, with them everywhere. They enjoy the esteem of their fellows. They can hold their heads high, when they walk abroad, and can afford to look any man in the face. They are certain of Heaven, secure against danger. God is with them, and Moses needed no other assurance from the lips of Jehovah to go down to Egypt and fight Pharaoh for his people.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

Epistle, 1 St. Peter 4; 7–12 *Gospel, St. John 15; 26, 27–16; 1–4.*

"These things have I spoken to you that you may not be scandalized."
—St. John 16, 1.

In this world of mystery and iniquity there are many things hard to understand. And, what pinches most of all, there are in the life of an earnest, God-fearing Catholic, many disappointments as disagreeable to human nature as they are unintelligible to unaided self-love. We have to believe, and we rejoice in the belief, that our Leader and Captain, the Lord Christ, was God. And yet the three years of public life He devoted to converting a small corner of the world were, when compared with the splendid achievements of any modern hero, a dismal failure. He came down from Heaven to earth to be the Messiah and King of Israel, and Israel crucified Him. He lavished the love of His fond Heart on the twelve apostles, and one of these twelve was the first suicide of the New Law. He worked miracle after miracle to arrest the attention of future ages, and rivet their gaze on the saving doctrine He preached; and future ages, our own age in particular, halt only to scoff at His miracles and denounce His doctrine as folly. He founded His Church, and set up a hedge designed to make all believers one fold, one family; and the passions of men have torn His flock into as many different sects as there are individual intellects and beastly cravings to satisfy. He promised in language that admits of no misunderstanding a hundredfold in this life to such as abide by the hard precepts of His moral code, and say nay to the instincts within them clamoring for recognition; and yet God's friends are poor, His enemies are rich, saints' souls go hungry waiting for the clouds to lift. Things are apparently gone topsy-turvy, and the coin of virtue

is seemingly so depreciated in value that it cannot purchase a taste of the good things, that sin procures in such abundance for its votaries.

But, standing in the full light of today's gospel, we envy not the wicked their feasts. "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized." With the peace of a good conscience, with the sure hope of an eternity in the bosom of God, we are rich enough, whatever befalls us in this life. We are well content to sit in the street outside the rich man's house with Lazarus, whose sores the dogs of the highway licked. We can afford to love sorrow, embrace pain, and laugh at troubles, that shall not accompany us beyond the grave. In peace of conscience we own a comfort, that the money of sin cannot purchase; and we know that there is a death's head at all the banquets to which the enemies of God sit down. We know that the wicked cannot forever crowd out all thought of the dismal future awaiting them after their little lives of a hundred years. Remorse of conscience is no delusion! It is the unmistakable and inevitable sign of God's displeasure. It is the only thunderbolt God hurls, and the only unseen hand that in this Providence wreaks God's vengeance on the rebellious. "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized." These things hath God put into our hearts, that we may stand firm when confronted with the enigma presented by the seemingly unfair distribution of prizes, that obtains in the short-lived world of today, only because a balance is to be struck in the unending ages of eternity.

And here is the enigma! We move among and we do business with men, who live in open defiance of all the laws impressed upon us from childhood as the sacredest of obligations. These men have to our own personal knowledge been going to bed every night for the past fifteen, twenty, thirty years, and have been getting up in the morning as hale and hearty for the day's round of work and enjoyment as neighbors, who bend their neck to the galling yoke of God's law, and hourly stab to the death poor self-love. These men have in many instances reared families of happy children, in the centre of home-circles far less acquainted with the shadow of sorrow than that of many a religious minded man; and yet the God they dishonor and con-

demn, who, we believe holds the lightnings at His service, has not sent a thunderbolt from the sky to cut short their mad career. He has not sent an invisible hand in the night to stifle their breath as they slept. He has not ruined them in business, He has not reduced them to beggary, He has not unpeopled their happy homes of wife and children. We are cognizant of the small part God plays in their lives; we are acquainted with the material success that attends their undertakings; and we should not be wholly human, if it did not at times occur to us to think that wickedness, impiety, unbelief are paying investments. I have seen the streets of a city as large as our own packed tight with men, women and children, to do the honors of war to a renegade from the Church of his childhood, the faith of his fathers. I have seen flags at half-mast, business suspended, to honor the memory of a blatant infidel, a blasphemer, who, while in life, stood on a public platform, and defiantly invited God to strike him dead.

This same thought once staggered the royal Psalmist, and that too in so overwhelming a manner that he had soberly to sit down, and study the thing out. His reflections on the subject are contained in Psalm 72. "Behold," he says, "these are sinners, and yet, abounding in the world, they have obtained riches. And I said, 'Then have I in vain justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent. And I have been scourged all the day, and my chastisement hath been in the mornings. I studied, that I might know this thing, it is a labor in my sight.' " And so from the days of David down to our own time the prosperity of the wicked has been a stumbling block to men of little faith; and, till time is no more, the prosperity of the wicked shall continue to be a powerful engine of war in the hands of the enemy of souls.

There is only one way out of the difficulty, the way David followed. With him we must go into the sanctuary of God, and understand with him concerning the last end of the wicked. No good can come of lying to ourselves. It is an indisputable fact that sin is an enjoyable thing, and that sinners enjoy themselves intensely. In spite of what the copy-books of childhood say to the contrary, virtue is not its own reward; and no hermit would weaken his body with prolonged fasts, no saint would for

a lifetime say nay to his passions, were there no God of love to meet them on the other side of death, were there no Heaven of happiness without end on the other side of the grave. Death is the key to this, as it is to a thousand other mysteries of life; and the very existence of an eternal, omnipotent, holy, and just God is the rampart behind which we must entrench ourselves, to do stout battle with the spirits of darkness and with the doubts they scatter broadcast. Half-hearted measures in this matter are fatal. We must fill ourselves with the conviction that there is a God; and this conviction must not be, like our best clothes, worn when we go to Mass on Sunday, and put away in some dark closet for the rest of the week. It must be worn always and everywhere. It must accompany us to work; it must be our last thought at night, when we close our eyes in sleep; it must be at our side in all sorts of company; it must have a place in our periods of recreation and amusement. It must in a word become as much part and parcel of our lives as the air we breathe. We must then satisfy ourselves that this real, live God is eternal, and has years without number at His disposal; that He is omnipotent, and has resources of power we cannot even dimly imagine; that He is holy, and hates iniquity with an exceeding great hate; that He is just, and punishes violations of His law with as unerring a hand as He rewards its observance. Any one of these several attributes of the Deity duly considered, can rob of some of its mystery the seemingly insoluble problem of the unequal distribution of good things in this life, of the prosperity of the wicked, the adversity of the just. Take, for instance, His eternity. Were God a mere man, able to look forward to only a few years of life, why, then His patience would have bounds and limits. He would deal out to offenders against His divine Majesty sure and swift retribution. But God is more than man, He is more than angel; and so He sits and waits; and, with more genuine pity than any a mother's heart ever experiences, He hopes against hope that some day or other these unnatural sons, for whose love He yearns, will lift their eyes His way, and ask the pardon He is ever ready to give. Yea, more, He makes His servant sun to rise and set upon them; He fills their nostrils with the life-giving balm of spring-time; He sends them the genial warmth

of summer, the myriad colors of autumn, the robust health of winter. He bestows on them more favors than He vouchsafes His very friends. God's friends are poor; His enemies are rich. God's friends dwell in homes where what the world calls happiness never enters, and where human sorrow is a perpetual guest; His enemies live behind doors locked and barred against want and misery, and, with health, wealth and happiness for companions, sit down to unending feasts. But a day of reckoning must come. Somewhere in God's eternity must come the day when wrongs shall be righted, when iniquity shall be stripped of its ill-gotten goods, and virtue shall lead a triumph. All the paths of life lead up to one narrow lane, and all the sons and daughters of men, be they kings, queens or beggars, are destined soon or late to walk this dark way. His judgment-seat is pitched at the head of the long avenue up which the dead journey, and in the twinkling of an eye each case is disposed of by Him to whom the past, the present, and the future are as clear as noonday. His friends, the chosen few, who while in life respected Him and His law, are ushered into bliss unending. His enemies, who disdaining all His invitations had eaten, drunk and made merry without a thought of the consequences, are swept into the devouring flames of hell. The mystery of life becomes at last an open secret. The wicked no more prosper, the virtuous weep no more.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

Epistle, Acts 2; 1–11 *Gospel, St. John 14; 23–31*

"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, will teach you all things."
—St. John 14, 26.

This feast of Pentecost is an all-important day in the history of our Church. It is the birthday of Catholicity. It is the recurrent anniversary of the solemn hour when the Holy Ghost in the form of fiery tongues rested on the heads of the apostles, and renewed their hearts. It is an event full of memories, full of courage. Meditation on its mysteries can make our arms strong for the stout battle we have to do with temptation and sin. Today nearly one thousand nine hundred years ago St. Peter, the head of our Church, experienced a change of heart, that can make the most timid hope. Transformed into a giant of courage, he stepped from the upper room into the street to address an enraged multitude of his Master's murderers. He made the pavements of Jerusalem ring with loud denunciation of the Jews. He planted repentance in three thousand bosoms, and wet three thousand heads with the saving waters of Baptism. These three thousand were the first fruits of the redeeming blood Christ shed on the cross some fifty days before. They were our forefathers in the faith, and today we reverently keep the anniversary of their new birth. Their reception of the Holy Ghost is a pledge of the Spirit's abiding presence in their descendants, and we are their descendants. Our membership in the true Church vests us with a title to helps in the way of comfort, grace and strength denied the rest of mankind. The Holy Ghost, then, is our Comforter, and this solace no man can take from us. As long as we remain loyal to the Church of the Apostles, so long can we count on the peace of soul Christ promised them and their children, so long can we afford to

despise the petty ills and worries of life, and snap our fingers at the alluring pleasures apparently enjoyed by the servants of hell and sin. God would not be God, if a life, dedicated to virtue and strict compliance with His law, were all sorrow, and concealed nowhere in its duration a sweetness surpassing whatever sweetness this earth knows. "Taste and see that the Lord is sweet," says the Royal Psalmist (33, 9), and if our lips are at times strangers to this mystical taste, the fault is on our side. We are not generous enough, we are not by half the magnanimous and magnificent beings sons of saints ought to be. We plod along entirely unconscious of the comforter at our side, ready, if we but open the doorway of our hearts, to flood our souls with the consolations of peace. We must, therefore, throw ourselves into the mood, we must act well the part of God's heroes; and, though we walk rough ways, and though we taste the sorrow Jesus drank, we hold His hand, we are children of the promise, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid." John, 14, 27. "Singing in grace in your hearts to God." Coloss. 3, 16.

Besides being our comforter, the Holy Ghost is the dispenser of God's grace and the spirit of sanctification. Personal holiness is in great measure a free gift of the Holy Ghost. In degree it is dependent on man's coöperation with grace; and the sacraments are the distributing depots of this Heavenly favor. The sacraments are seven. Of these, three can be received but once, Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders. One is reserved to the hour of our death, Extreme Unction. Another is seldom received oftener than once, Matrimony. Two can be received every day of the year, Penance and Holy Communion. Therefore, a Catholic's loyalty to confession and communion is a fair test of his worth in the sight of God, of the earnestness with which he seeks salvation. We have frequent need of these two sacraments. They are the medicine and the food of our souls. A soul in the state of mortal sin is sick, and needs confession. A soul long away from the Holy Table goes hungry, and must languish and die spiritually.

Last of all, we receive the Holy Ghost in Confirmation to make us strong and perfect Christians and soldiers of Jesus

Christ. We must, therefore, be ready for opposition, prepared for the exigencies of war, for wound, and smart, and death. In His own lifetime on earth our Captain and Leader, Christ, told us what to expect. He issued an open declaration of war, when He said, "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what would I but that it be enkindled?" He summons His friends to war, not to peace. Violence is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven. Truth can never live on terms of peace with falsehood. It is the worst sign in the world, when enemies with wholly opposite principles are much in each other's company. One or other party falls away from principle, and the man unprincipled in any one particular is a dangerous fellow. He finds it easy to go wrong, when convenience makes a call on his honor. We are, therefore, at war with the world; and defeat is not far distant, when one of two combatants foolishly imagines that no signs of war are in the air. When war comes in the nature of a surprise, the nation unprepared for its coming is a sure loser. We must, therefore, be on our guard, and be suspicious of every movement made by the enemy. We must strike wherever an armed foe appears, and carry our weapons in our hands. No compromise with error, is Rome's watchword; and it must be ours. When public opinion is wrong, we must frown it down. We must sacrifice the friend who proves an obstacle to piety or faith. We must be courageous to tell the truth about our belief, even if the heavens fall, even if ridicule, scorn and contempt follow. The truth seldom alienates friends, and the only souls outside the fold worth converting are the men and women with character enough left to respect the Catholic, who values his Church as he values his life, and scorns to hide or belittle its teaching.

To silence God's enemies, we must set in motion every energy at our disposal. As citizens of this republic, we must scorn to degrade the ballot to the vile uses of foes to God and foes to religion. As Catholics we must unfurl our banner, and take a heroic stand in the affairs of our country's history. We must fill the public eye with reminders of God, and virtue, and religion. We must keep the trumpet of God's glory to our lips, ready to blow everywhere tidings of God's law and His mercies. We must be aggressively Catholic! Our enemies pretend to

clamor for peace, but they approach us with clubs behind their backs, and they are doing all in their power to check the growth of God's Kingdom. Witness Europe; witness America! The schools are engines of war in iniquity's hands. Politics are turned to unholy uses. Secret societies make the dark work of the wicked most effective. There are abroad in this free country tendencies against which we must raise our voice as long as we enjoy the gift of speech. There are traffickers in men's souls who must be whipped from public notice with knotted scourges set with iron; and the ballot is a weapon ready to hand. By judicious use of the ballot we must teach our enemies that they cannot with impunity wrong and insult God's fairest daughter, the Catholic Church, and that no candidate, to whatever party he belongs, can count on our support, unless he pledges himself and redeems his pledge to do Catholics the small measure of justice resident in fair play. Without at all wishing to become the Church of the State, we Catholics have a constitutional right to exemption from persecution on account of our religion. We have been martyrs long enough! It is high time for us to put on the heroism of soldiers, and assert ourselves, and take a bolder and more active part in the conduct and management of affairs. We are descendants of the Crusaders as well as of the martyrs! We must organize for purposes of defense! God in the present dispensation of Providence wants His sons to work along the lines of ordinary human prudence, and make their own whatever advantages reside in the art of combining and uniting forces. In union there is strength; and this saying is as true for the army of God's workers, as it is for the soldiers engaged in fighting a country's battles. Catholics the country over are waking up to the situation. Progress towards federation is stirring everywhere. We are a power in the land, and hitherto we have wasted our forces to the infinite delight of our enemies. We have allowed divisions in our ranks created by petty political differences to check the onward march of faith and religion. We have been frightened from our duty to God and His Church by the senseless clamor of sharp hypocrites against allegiance to Rome. But better days are dawning, and our men are beginning to understand that we can still be loyal American citizens without sacrificing our religious principles; we can still

be Catholics without taking up arms against the United States, without inviting the Pope to subjugate our country. We have duties towards God as well as towards our government, and it is comforting to know that, in spite of what demagogues preach to the contrary, our duties towards God are far from interfering with our duties towards government. In our Catechism Catholicity is the expression of God's will, and in defending its tenets we are doing homage to God. Satisfied that our Church is the only true Church, and that her doctrine is the only doctrine stamped with the seal of Heaven's approval, we must be pardoned the assumption that every ounce of recognition paid the claims of the Catholic Church is a distinct gain to our country. Therefore, in furthering the interests of our religion, we are adding new laurels to our country's crown; and in fighting down opposition to her growth we are in reality hastening the dawn of millennium. When on the stage of public life, no matter how obscure or how conspicuous the position we fill, our unbending Catholicity must proclaim us to the world champions of God's cause, soldiers in the Kingdom, with the ancestral blood of martyrs in our veins. We are the Catholic sons of Catholic fathers. Our Church is our Mother; and, compassed as she is by her enemies, she leans on us for support. If we abandon her, if we make her interests second to any on earth, we are degenerate sons, and deserve the obloquy of universal reprobation. Our faith is the richest jewel we can call our own. If we lose it, all is lost. If we tarnish its fair fame by word or example, we are traitors, and deserve only to be whipped out of camp.

TRINITY SUNDAY

Epistle, Romans 11; 33–36 *Gospel, St. Matthew 28; 18–20*

"Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

—St. Matthew 28, 19.

The Church dedicates one special Sunday of the year to the memory of the Most Holy Trinity. Her conduct is, therefore, warrant enough for a few words about the mystery. And the Trinity is a mystery, the profoundest, perhaps, in our religion. It presents more difficulties to the human mind, it is surrounded with more obscurity than any other article of our faith. Reason alone and unaided can, from the varied wonders of creation visible about and around us, rise with no apparent effort to a knowledge of God's existence. But reason, unless instructed by the spoken word of God Himself, and strengthened by the grace of faith, would forever remain ignorant of the fact that God combines three distinct persons in one single nature. The assertion that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and that there is, nevertheless, only one God, is at first sight so much opposed to what we know about numbers, that reason, far from being equal to discovering the truth, is wholly at a loss for direct categoric answers to difficulties that suggest themselves. Reason can, therefore, be of no great assistance to us in the matter. But faith was meant by God for reason's guiding angel. Faith and reason working harmoniously together can banish every doubt, can make easy of comprehension many a thing otherwise hard to understand. Reason teaches us that God is witness in Scripture to the fact of the Trinity. Reason further teaches us that God cannot give testimony to a lie. After furnishing us with these two pieces of information, reason's work is at an end, and she lapses into silence. If she presumes to go farther, she ventures into for-

bidden fields. She speaks only to raise difficulties, only to urge man to abandon the truth. Faith here comes to reason's rescue, bending will and mind to believe where it cannot understand, to accept as true the Trinity and unity of the Godhead in spite of all the motives that shortsighted reason can advance, to shake belief in the truth.

Man is proud of his mind. It makes him kith and kin with the angels. It constitutes him lord of this lower universe. To confound this pride of intellect, and assert His supremacy over even man's mind, God has reserved to Himself the knowledge of certain secrets, and common sense counsels, yea commands, submission of judgment, when face to face with this reserve fund of infinite wisdom. Common sense bids us in the presence of mysteries cry out in all humility with the apostles, "Lord, increase our faith!" We believe, then, that there is one God in three divine persons; we believe that, though the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, there is, nevertheless, only one God; we believe that the Father exists from all eternity, the source and origin of the Son and Holy Ghost; we believe that the Son existing from all eternity is begotten of the Father; we believe that the Holy Ghost existing from all eternity proceeds from both Father and Son.

Centuries ago, when men were not slaves to passions that flatter the senses, when men wedded to thought dealt more largely in speculation, this dogma of the Trinity had many opponents; and the early history of the Church is full of decrees and declarations against their errors. But the world of today is too busy with things material, too intent on discovering excuses for the gratification of its baser instincts, to declare war against doctrines like that of the Trinity. The world of today in its devilish zeal for the cause of inquity outstrips paganism itself. It labors and sweats to blot God from the universe of existences. Paganism recognised God in some form or other; and this recognition of a supreme being, the rewarder of good, the avenger of evil, exercised a salutary check on paganism's unruly appetites. Modern agnosticism, modern atheism will have none of God. License must be unbridled, the devotees of sin must feel free to perpetrate their shameless orgies under cover

of the dark. God, the searcher of hearts, whose all-seeing eye penetrates the thickest night, must be removed from the catalogue of realities; and then hell will be able to do its worst. Hell's minions will then have to dread only the blind vision of honest neighbors. And after a night of wickedness a thoroughly bad man can go forth in the morning to his place of business with as sanctimonious an exterior and as smiling a countenance as painters bestow on cherubs.

This is the degradation of our century, this is the foul blot on our civilization. And it remains for the loyal sons and daughters of the God we love so much, for the footsore soldiers of a footsore King, fighting still to push His interests among men, to acknowledge with all the sincerity of which we are capable the age-old dogmas of our faith, to make these dogmas part and parcel of our everyday life, and let earth and Heaven know that the cause of God is not dead yet. It remains for us to honor in a practical way the Father, Son and Holy Ghost by frequent remembrance of the debts we owe them for creation, redemption and sanctification.

Each of these three favors is the joint work of the three divine persons. But for convenience sake we agree to refer creation principally to the Father; redemption, to the Son; sanctification, to the Holy Ghost. Omnipotence is characteristic of the Father; wisdom, of the Son; and love, of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, when meditating the creation, we are honoring the Father; when meditating the redemption, we are honoring the Son; when meditating our sanctification, we are honoring the Holy Ghost. Our creation is the origin of our duties towards God. It founds God's title to our knowledge, love and service. In virtue of it we are entirely the work of God's hands. He owns us body and soul; and, that we might never lose sight of the fact, He branded us all over with the marks of His ownership. Property belongs to its owner; robbery intervenes, whenever this rule is violated; and reason emphatically condemns robbery. When a man refuses to acknowledge God, he is robbing his Maker of a mind's homage. When a man refuses to love God, he is robbing God of a heart's affection. When a man refuses to serve God, he attempts in effect to rob God of a measure of glory. These are some of the thoughts that circle around

creation, and warm within us love for God the Father, creation's author.

God the Son has no smaller claims on our gratitude. We are indebted to Him for our redemption, and our faith contains no more consoling dogma than that of redemption through the Lord Christ. The scheme of redemption, as proposed to us for belief by our Church, is at the same time full of comfort and a ringing call to duty. Full of comfort, because we who were hell's captives are now free; a ringing call to duty, because, though our freedom was purchased at the cost of Christ's saving blood, we can retain it only by a generous life of self-sacrifice and self-denial.

Moreover, to make His work complete, Christ in the capacity of Redeemer played a triple part. He was at the same time Saviour, teacher and King. He paid our ransom, He struck the shackles of sin from our feet and hands, and put us in the fight again with our strong adversary, the devil. He paid the penalty of Adam's sin, and paid in advance the penalty of every sin the sons of Adam were to commit till the end of time. But the payment He rendered was by an express agreement between Himself and His Father only conditional, and the condition rests with us. He would assume our debts only after we satisfied Him that we stood ready to discharge them ourselves, if the thing were possible; only after we satisfied Him by a sincere confession and firm purpose of amendment that we abhorred sin, and were determined to get at last into His holy footprints and sin no more. Had He, therefore, not taught us how to keep clear of sin, had He not by His own sweet example marked out ways for us through the flowery fields of virtue, had He not laid at our feet some such stepping stone from death to life as the Sacrament of Penance, why, His work as a Redeemer would have been incomplete. He found mankind at His advent into the world not only up to the shoulders in vice and corruption, but weak and ignorant, and timid from repeated defeat. As Saviour He blotted out the record of our sinfulness; as teacher, in maxims scattered through the Gospels, in word and deed, He left us precious legacies of virtue for our imitation. He taught us how to avoid sin, and taught us how, when surprised and overcome by the enemy, to run to our

mother for protection in confession. But, even with all these safeguards, He foresaw that our souls were not yet closely enough hedged round about with protection. To make His task an assured success, as King He founded a Church, and invited us, summoned us to huddle close together under the safety of His standard. As invisible head of the Church He is seated on a throne, watching all the members of that Church fighting the good fight of salvation like an army in battle array. We are not now, thanks to the goodness of our King, single handed in the struggle. My battle is your battle, and our battle is the battle of the whole Catholic world. We may not be ourselves much of a credit to our faith, our lives may not be a topic of boasting to our fellow-Catholics; but, if anybody upbraids us with our deficiencies, we can appeal to the heroic feats of brothers in arms, and can at least give expression to the fond hope that God will pity our weakness for their sake, and will lend some day to our poor good will some little of their giant strength.

God the Holy Ghost is the finisher of our faith. He is the comforter so often and so solemnly promised the apostles by Christ for a substitute. He continues the work begun by the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, and sanctifies citizens in the Son's Kingdom. He dispenses the grace purchased for us by Christ, and in silence gets men's hearts ready for the eternal and infinitely sweet task of loving God. He sits like a monarch enthroned in the soul of every saint, and He is busy looking for an entrance into the soul of every sinner. In every step we take towards Heaven we are leaning on the strength of His arm, and His watchful care is our hope, when we go wide of the path. He is the single friend, whose whispers are invariably healthful to the ear, whose counsels are golden opportunities scattered along our lives. The Father created us, the Son redeemed us, the Holy Ghost sanctifies us, and ceases from labor only when He sees the gate of Heaven locked and barred behind us, and knows our salvation secure.

Let this, then, be the fruit of the day's feast, to honor in a practical way the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; to pursue our daily avocations with an abiding consciousness of the near presence of the Father, making ready against our coming an

eternal abode in the heavenly Jerusalem; with an abiding consciousness of approving glances from the Son, who will clasp us to His Sacred Heart as brothers in His Father's house; with an abiding consciousness of encouragement warm from the Holy Ghost, Who came to earth after the Lord's ascension to pour comfort into the sinking hearts, and strength into the tired sinews of the children of the King.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 John 3; 13–18 *Gospel, St. Luke 14; 15–24*

"A certain man made a great supper and invited many."
—St. Luke 14, 16.

Frequent Communion is the keynote of the morning's message. The marriage feast in the gospel story just read, is a lovely disguise for the Holy Eucharist, and we are the guests mercifully bidden to the banquet. In this one respect some Catholics are sadly fallen away from the traditions of their ancestors in the faith; and the farther back we journey in the history of our Church, the closer we come to the true spirit of Catholicity. Prayer and Holy Communion were distinguishing traits of the early Christians. "They were persevering in the breaking of bread and in prayers." A. A. 2, 42. "Breaking bread, from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart," A. A. 2, 46. "On the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread." A. A. 20, 7. These are scattered expressions taken at random from the Acts of the Apostles, the authentic history of the Early Church, from the morning it stepped forth young and vigorous, in full possession of the Holy Ghost, down to the year 63. Daily Communion was the rule, not the exception, during this springtime of fervor. The faithful never heard Mass without approaching the altar rail, and no day passed without its morning Mass. Persecution rudely interfered with their devotions, and by degrees they had to limit their meetings for prayer and Holy Communion to Sundays. But for the first eight hundred years of Christianity eight days were considered the extreme interval between Communion and Communion. Then came a falling off in piety; and, midway in the centuries, about 1215, the Lateran Council of the Church had to enact a law obliging the

faithful under pain of mortal sin to receive at Easter or thereabouts. Three centuries later Protestantism happened along, and loyalty to the Blessed Sacrament became the badge of Catholicity, the dividing line between the true Church of God and the sects. Frequent Communion began again to be universal; and great saints, like Ignatius, Francis Xavier, and Philip Neri, vigorously preached the custom in season and out of season. Jansenism, the sharpest trick played by the devil on the sons of God, checked for a short period the growth of the saving practice. The Jansenists, under the pretext of unworthiness, forbade pious souls to approach Holy Communion oftener than once a year. They kept Jesus locked in the tabernacle for purposes of adoration, and denied Him entrance into the hearts of His children. Devotion to the Sacred Heart rescued the faithful from this heresy within the Church, and from the days of Margaret Mary down to our own times weekly communion is growing in favor with the friends of God. This is the century of the Sacred Heart. Pope Leo of happy memory once ventured to say it, and with us Catholics the word of God's Vicar on earth is law. This is the century of the Sacred Host. All the visions vouchsafed the handmaid of the Sacred Heart were granted from the altar-throne. Jesus, our King of the Sacred Heart, held audience with His servant in front of the tabernacle door; and frequent communion, daily, weekly, monthly, is the crown and summit of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Devotion to the Holy Eucharist shall forever continue the dividing line between Catholicity and the sects, and weekly communion is fast becoming the mark of separation between fervent Catholics and slothful Catholics, between saints of God and worldly sinners, between heroes in the Kingdom and sluggards in the camp. Suspicion attaches to the heart-service of friends so indifferent to Christ's pleadings that they stay away a longer space from His wedding-feast. Like the father of the bridegroom in the gospel, God our Lord has to send His servants into the highways and the byways to drive guests to the supper, and compel them to partake of the feast. And love is a stranger to compulsion or restraint. Love is as free as the untrammeled air. Whoso measures his heart-beats, and

counts his tokens of affection with all the mean exactness of a miser, is incapable of love, and no fit pupil for the school of the Sacred Heart, the school of Christ's infinite fondness. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet." Ps. 33, 9. "Come ye, buy wine and milk without money." Isai. 55, 1.

Holy Communion is an open treasury of comfort and consolation; and we beggars, we exiles in this valley of tears, go on dying of hunger, go on wearing our hearts out with trouble, when with faith and earnestness we could every morning of the year, every week of the year, carry away with us from the Holy Table the God of plenty, the joy of the angels, the central sun of Heaven's undimmed happiness. The union cemented between God and a soul in fervent communion, is beyond anything that human friendship knows. It can be felt, but not described; and they that once learn the secret of that complete surrender to the Sacred Heart, enacted in communion at the altar-rail, would not miss its sweetness for alliances with kings, for ages in the company of the world's most consummate entertainers. It is a union as close as the soul is to the body. It is a union as crowded with delights as Eden was with blessings. It is a union as intoxicatingly full of bliss as Heaven is of sunshine. God and the soul are friends, between whom there are no secrets, no unease, no doubt, no suspicions, no anxiety, no selfishness; nothing but fondness and love, and interest, and willingness to lose everything rather than slip from the place each holds in the other's thoughts. Communion is Cana, the scene of the first miracle of Jesus, with Mary and the angels, with the bride and the bridegroom, and the wondering disciples. And, while the guests are making merry, the right hand of omnipotence is changing valueless water into precious wine, the water of irresolution into the firmness of generous wine, the water of slipping weakness into the strength of old wine, the water of stumbling hesitancy into the straightness and stoutness of courage and fearlessness in the service of God. And the soul herself, all unaware of the miracle, ignorant of the divine might at work within her, wonders in rapt ecstasy whence come the changed emotions that agitate her bosom, and warm her inmost depths with a fervor borrowed from the burning heart of God. And well, indeed, may she wonder. The miracles of change

wrought by frequent communion are whole worlds in excess of the change enacted at Cana. Could we discern them with these eyes of the flesh, we should experience a wider surprise than that which provoked the animated conversation between the alarmed butler and the master of the feast. Here at the altar-rail every morning of the year transformations of heart are being effected that only God and the angels see. Sinners are being turned into saints, hearts of hate are being crushed and moulded into centres of kindliness and love. Greed is yielding to the softening influences of God's grace, and growing towards charity. Old pleasures are losing their attractiveness, wearing to bitterness, and yielding place to what delights of virtue make saints run in the way to God. And men and women are rising up from the altar-rail to go out into the world of trade and business with new hearts, and new aspirations, and new ambitions. Children rise up from the same Heavenly feast with hearts of giants, sound and true, sure proof against the allurements and enticements, that scatter the long way ahead. Progress from virtue to virtue is assured; and, because God's sons are enamoured of frequent communion, because they are marching out against the enemy under the standard of the Sacred Heart and the standard of the Sacred Host, the world of men's hearts is on the eve of a revolution, gladder days are dawning and the glow of holiness, that makes Christianity's initial page a sacred leaf in history, is fingering the horizon in the East. Truly the world is journeying back, after its long chase of shadows, to the early ages of Christ's true Church, when He was its teacher in the flesh, and His twelve apostles personally held the reins of government. And frequent communion is the motive force at work. The world is growing better, because, thanks to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the world is crowding around the altar-rail. We think we see indications of a speedy return to the early times of the Church, in the wide growth of love for Holy Communion manifest everywhere. And we are indulging no empty fancies. Whatever may be said of other countries, here in America frequent communion is too evident a fact to escape notice. And in the realm of activities, spiritual as well as material, like causes produce like effects. What Holy Communion wrought for our ancestors in

the faith, Holy Communion must work for us their descendants. It kept them free from the contaminating influences of sin, when the world around reeked with moral filth. It must keep our hearts free from the polluting touch of dust-motes that hover in our lower air. It changed them from timid maidens and worldly minded men to martyrs, able to smile with contempt at gaping wounds and torrents of blood, able to trample under foot military glory and imperial honor, and consort in glad content with the poor and despised of Christ. It must enable us to meet with patience whatever annoyances attach to the performance of duty. It must pour into us a courage, that can sustain us in misfortune, and lend us the strength needed to carry on and up forever the yoke of God's law, and deny ourselves for the Master's sake whatever honor, pleasure and wealth sin procures for its slaves. And Holy Communion is daily working this miracle of change in hearts enamored of its sweetness, and initiated into its secret mysteries of Christian fortitude.

But with all the sunshine created by this blissful thought of God's spreading glory, there is a cloud on the horizon, and it must be the work of the League to dissipate it. Women, old and young, are with rare exceptions doing God's will in this matter of frequent communion, and are gloriously seconding the efforts of the Sacred Heart to establish a Kingdom in the world. They approach the Holy Table in multitudes, and with sentiments of the tenderest piety. And God bless them for the gladness they do His Son's fond Heart. But the men? Well, God bless them likewise; for they need it. And may God so abundantly bless them that in the near future they may rival their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters in allegiance and loyalty to the banner of the Sacred Host. Men are still flocking in goodly numbers to the League; but they remain, as it were, at the door, afraid to push right up to the front, and fill conspicuous places in the army. They are content in too many cases with membership in the First Degree, and feel too distrustful of self to promise God the daily decade, the weekly, monthly communion of reparation. The devout male sex is a misnomer. Piety sits awkwardly on men, it adds a borrowed dignity to women. We easily slip into the mistake of confounding virtue

with physical weakness, and men are nothing, if not strong, robust, impetuous. Besides, men are toilers, engrossed with business, driven daily to the pit of commerce and trade to do battle with problems, that monopolize their energies, embarrass their thoughts and estrange them from God. A sense of unworthiness is engendered by these minor faults, and by slow degrees men reckon themselves unsuited for frequent communion, unfit to often approach the God of holiness. Men, correct these mistakes. Never in your lives were you farther from the truth. Piety is not weakness. You were not created by God Almighty merely to do business, and discharge the functions of a human machine. Even if you are less worthy of the divine favor than members of the devout female sex, in letting long intervals elapse between communion and communion, far from rendering yourselves worthier of the gift, you are withdrawing yourselves from the source of spiritual strength, you are dying spiritually by inches. Go often to communion. If you want to put on the omnipotence of God against temptation, if you want to carry your immortal souls safely through the dangers that beset you outside the sanctity of your homes, let no month, let no week pass, without strengthening yourselves at the Holy Table, without partaking of this bread of the elect, this wine that produces virgins.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 St. Peter 5; 6–11 *Gospel, St. Luke 15; 1–10*

"There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."

—St. Luke 15, 10.

Repentance is the first halting-place in a sinner's downward career. It is that point in his journey, where he fronts about and turns his face again towards the God of love he was leaving. This hour of repentance marks a crisis in the sinner's life. He has grown so used to traveling in the wrong direction, he has grown so accustomed to the pleasant things of sense bordering the way, that he can with difficulty reconcile himself to the pangs of denial and sacrifice. "It is easy," says a pagan poet, "to go down to hell; but to point one's feet the other way, and get up into the light, that is heavy work and hard." And yet hard and heavy as the work is, it must be done. For a sinner, salvation without repentance is impossible. Unless he acquits himself of all that repentance means, he cannot hope to see God. And this repentance is no mere matter of barren sentiment, a momentary pleasurable feeling. It is a purpose, born and rooted deep down in a man's heart, to assume in his own regard the capacity of God's avenger, to loathe and detest past offenses, and render future offense impossible by keeping at a safe distance from persons, places, and things known from sad experience to be dangerous. In one word, penance is a heroic resolution to comply with all the hard conditions prescribed by Christ for the forgiveness of sin, to undergo the humiliation involved in what we Catholics call confession. Christ invites sinners to reconciliation, and His terms are clear. He offers to take the sinner's right hand again in friendship at confession. He agrees to forgive and forget the past on the one condition, that we kneel before the priest, acknowledge our

guilt, express our sorrow, a firm determination to reform, and a willingness to comply with the priest's orders and advice.

I am well aware that outside of the Catholic Church penance or repentance is a process altogether free from pain. Heresy rates every work of satisfaction done by the individual an insult to the infinite merits of Christ. Fasting, vigils, bodily chastisement of whatever kind, inflicted with the purpose of atonement, are esteemed a species of superstition, a legacy from what our enemies complacently style the barbarism of the Dark Ages. The view they take of repentance is eminently flattering to human nature, inviting to the senses, and quite in keeping with man's instinctive love of ease and comfort. It forever does away with the harsher features of Christian duty, and impudently proclaims, in opposition to divine wisdom, that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers no violence. This lamentable belief is less than four hundred years old. It dates from the beginning of the so-called Reformation. Its discoverers, to inspire themselves and their deluded followers with confidence, looked through Scripture for texts able to give their opinion a coloring of truth. And every vagary of the human mind, presented to the world as a false system of religion, succeeds in wresting from the Sacred Writings some expression apparently favoring its madness. The Bible is a book that more than any other needs an authoritative interpreter; and, if the Lord Christ left us Catholics no such guide in the person of an infallible Church, we should in a day be as religiously absurd, as spiritually ignorant, as widely torn asunder as our separated brethren.

Resting their contention on the Greek version of the Testament, these teachers of heresy found the word penance rendered from the corresponding Greek word, metanoia, which beyond a doubt means change of mind or resolution of amendment. They quite forget that in many cases this change of mind commended by Scripture is further developed to embrace works distinctively penitential or laborious. I need cite only these few instances. "Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning." Joel 2, 12. "Therefore, I reprehend myself, and do penance in dust and ashes." Job 42, 6. "Tyre and Sidon had long ago done penance in sackcloth

and ashes." St. Matt. 11, 21. It must be evident from these several passages that the word on which our opponents lay so much stress was meant by the inspired writers to mean more than mere change of mind. The Latin word poenitentia, employed in the Vulgate as equivalent for metanoia, is a derivative from poena, meaning punishment, penalty or pain. In Cicero and the other classic writers poenitentia stands always for self-inflicted discomfort of some kind. And our own English word penance or repentance betrays manifest relationship with the Latin word poenitentia. Besides, words get their force from usage rather than from grammar, and for fifteen hundred years of Christianity this strange and perverted meaning of penance was unknown to the world at large. And even at this late day the meaning arbitrarily attached to the word by heresy is not generally accepted by the learned.

In whatever way sin was forgiven in the Old Dispensation, whatever may be alleged in favor of perfect contrition or charity as an extraordinary means of forgiveness, we Catholics know that, since the coming of Christ and the establishment of His Church of the New Dispensation, the one ordinary means of forgiveness is the Sacrament of Penance or Confession, promulgated by Christ in St. John 20, 23. And Confession is a composite of several acts on the part of priest and penitent. Absolution is the priest's exclusive function. On the part of the penitent we distinguish four different acts necessary of accomplishment. They are examination of conscience, contrition, manifestation of sins to the priest, and performance of the penance imposed by him. Contrition or sorrow, to be genuine and true, must embrace change of mind, or purpose of amendment, and this added element of contrition is of paramount importance. But, like every other element of paramount importance in a composite being or act, it is far from constituting the whole thing. Thus, food is of paramount importance for the sustenance of life, but death can ensue in the midst of plenty, and instances of starvation at bountiful feasts are matters of history. Millionaires have died of hunger, simply because the muscles of the throat refused to perform their functions.

According to the teaching of our Church, penance or satis-

faction is an element conducive and necessary to the forgiveness of sin. And this penance can be sacramental or extra-sacramental. Sacramental penance is compliance with the penalty imposed by the priest in confession. Extra-sacramental penance is whatever annoyance of body or mind the individual procures to himself by way of atonement for past offenses. It is evident from Scripture that God has two ways of punishing even the same sin. One punishment, eternal, lasts forever, and means hell. The other, temporal, lasts for only a certain definite period of time, and consists of the various afflictions we impose on ourselves or receive at the hands of God during life. If death finds us with any portion of this debt uncancelled, we are detained in Purgatory till the last farthing is paid. The priest, with the authority and in the name of the Church, substitutes the penance for whatever temporal punishment may be due to the sins he forgives in confession. It is, therefore, an article of our faith that, even after the guilt of mortal sin is remitted and blotted out, the sinner still owes God satisfaction, and must undergo a certain amount of pain for the wrong he has done. The priest's absolution frees the sinner from all the guilt of mortal sin; the penance he gives the sinner secures his escape from Purgatory.

God could have been satisfied with confession only, and could have agreed to cancel our sins and their entire punishment without any penance at all. But we know from Scripture that He chose this other way; and now, even after confession, we owe God part payment for our offenses, and must, besides confessing our sins, perform whatever penance the priest gives us to perform. We know that God has chosen this way from several examples or incidents set forth in Holy Scripture; and the most striking of these examples are Adam, Moses, David and the Israelites in the desert. Thus, God forgave Adam his sin of disobedience. He promised never to condemn him to hell for the same; but hear from the sacred pages the penance He imposed upon him, "Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat, cursed is the earth in thy work: with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to

thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Gen. 3, 17. Adam confessed and was forgiven, but what a penance he got from Almighty God! A curse on the earth, work, thorns, thistles, sweat and death. Moses, because he executed a command of God with some hesitation, was deprived of the glory of entering Canaan, the Land of Promise. When near the end of his journey of forty years from Egypt to Canaan, God said to Moses, "Go up into this mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, and see the land of Canaan, which I will deliver to the children of Israel to possess, and die thou on the mountain. Because you trespassed against me in the midst of the children of Israel, at the waters of Contradiction in Cades of the desert of sin, thou shalt see the land before thee, which I will give to the children of Israel, but thou shalt not enter into it." Deut. 3, 26. David confesses his twofold crime of adultery and murder. "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan, the prophet, said to David, "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin. Thou shalt not die. Nevertheless because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die." 2 Kings 12, 13. Another terrifying example is furnished us in the case of God's conduct towards the Israelites. More than a half million of people started with Moses from Egypt on that long journey of forty years to the Land of Promise; and every one of the half million over twenty years of age at the start perished in the desert on account of sins committed on the way. Only their children entered the Land of Promise. But hear the words of the inspired writer himself. Moses makes this prayer to God for his people, "Forgive, I beseech, the sins of this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy, as thou hast been merciful to them from their going out of Egypt unto this place." And the Lord said, "I have forgiven according to thy word. As I live, and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. But yet all the men that have seen my majesty and the signs that I have done in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, and have not obeyed my voice, shall not see the land, for which I swore to

their fathers. In the wilderness shall your carcasses lie." Num. 14, 19. It must be plain from these examples that even after the forgiveness of sins God exacts a penalty, sometimes to avenge the insult offered to His Majesty, at other times to recall the sinner to his senses, and move him to repentance and reform. The Church in God's name commissions her priests to exercise this divine prerogative of vengeance, and the penances they impose are its exercise. We must, therefore, receive these penances as coming from the hand of God, and fulfil them with fervor and exactness.

Apart even from the sacrament of forgiveness, penance is a sacred duty incumbent on every Christian. The way of the cross is the royal road to Heaven. We are confronted with the sombre shadow of Redemption's symbol at every step we take. Love lives of pain, and all through history pain is never absent from the side of love. It is love's faithful attendant, and its near presence kills suspicion about love's quality. One of the miracles wrought by Christ's coming and enduring to this our day, was the revolution of feeling produced everywhere with regard to the cross. Before He sanctified this symbol by choosing it for the emblem of redemption, it was everywhere in literature and law-procedure a sign of opprobrium, breathing of slaves and malefactors. His saving touch adorned the cross with jewels, and procured it admission to the crowns of kings and pinnacles of architecture. Since Christ died on the cross, no temple of worship is complete, till the cross crowns its topmost summit. Since Christ died on the cross, men and women whose thoughts are worthiest wear the cross next their hearts, and saints of God when dying go out to judgment with the cross imprinted for last object on their vision. We need recall only a few of the many reasons why the cross has so tight a hold on the affections of the sons and daughters of God. It is the symbol of our faith. The sign of the cross stands for our belief in the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption, the three greatest dogmas of our religion. It helps us to understand the malice of sin, the justice of God and His mercy. It is a hard thing to fathom the depths of sin's malice. Hell is one of its measures, death is another. But after all has been said, it forever remains true that Christ dead on the cross is the last

measure of sin's malice. Lucifer had more excuse for sinning than we. He sinned without an example of the kind for warning and instruction. No forward page in history bore record of crime and its consequences. His sin was the first black line drawn across the page, and every page since written smells of sin, sin nestles between all the leaves of the book since turned. For our instruction, for a warning to us, enduring monuments bearing in bold relief records of sin and its punishments are scattered up and down the ages of time. Adam and Eve have been chased from paradise at the point of a flaming sword, and the fair face of nature has been seamed and scarred with death, and disease, and sorrow, and weeds, and disasters by sea and land. Hell has opened to swallow up one third of Heaven's inhabitants. Rain has poured in torrents to drown a world. Fire and brimstone have eaten Sodom and Gomorrha, and God's wrath has wiped out every vestige of these cities of the plain. Empires have been overthrown, families robbed of their very name. And a God has been nailed to the cross. When Satan sinned, God had not died; and creation was ignorant of this living testimony to the enormity of sin. Our sins are the nails in Christ's hands and feet. Our crimes sharpened the spear-edge that tore open His sacred side. His death is our doing, and the cross is an undying witness to our ingratitude and meanness.

We are the sheep in this morning's parable, and we must not deny the angels in Heaven that measure of joy they derive from the penance of converted sinners. A sinner is a sheep gone astray. The commandments of God are a hedge marking off the territory we are to keep, and all the country round is a howling wilderness, a desert infested with wild beasts and thick with danger. Our superiors are our shepherds, and we are at our best only when in close touch with obedience. Our brothers and sisters in the faith compose the flock, and we are safest in their company. It is a sad mistake to wander far from their side in body or in spirit. We must limit our friendships to only such heroes and heroines as wear the same colors as ourselves. Their tastes are of a kind with our own, their example is an unfailing incentive to growth in holiness. And yet no life is without its periods of discontent, and these periods are

more frequent with some than with others. The poets talk of a certain feeling denominated wanderlust, a desire to get away from old surroundings, and tarry a short or long space among new scenes, new friends, new faces. A voice appropriately termed the call of the wild assails even the wisest ears on occasions, and to heed it spells trouble. Some such invitation induced the sheep in the story to wander wide of the flock. In the parable of the prodigal some such echo led the younger son to leave his father's house and go abroad into a far country. We tire of restraint, we grow curious about the beyond, we dream of sweeter and greener grasses in distant pastures. And oh, the folly of looking for satisfaction in forbidden delights. Beginners in the spiritual life are sometimes tempted to think that a certain step forward in the field of pleasure will constitute a limit beyond which they will not aspire to go, that this or that gratification will induce sleep and put them in possession of quiet. Let them take the step, and they will find to their sorrow that peace and happiness are farther off than ever.

The two virtues of justice and religion demand this tribute of penance at our hands. We have contracted heavy debts with God Almighty, and payment must be of a kind with the heavy wage exacted by the Father from His dying Son. Sacrifice touches the very essence of religion, and there can be no sacrifice without the death or destruction of a victim. We must be the victims, penance must be the sword, forever ready to hand for rending activity. God is supreme being. We must in a practical way acknowledge our dependence on Him by works of penance and self-denial. Every pang undergone for His sake is a silent acknowledgment of His divine ownership. The cross is a loud reminder of God's justice and His mercy. Rather than allow disturbed relations to continue between Himself and His creatures, He submitted His only begotten and well beloved Son to torments of the most refined cruelty, to a death of the most ignominious character. He stopped at no sacrifice to show kindness to a prostrate foe, and set us on our feet again at the expense of His divine Son's blood and life. And in the words of the apostle we must fill up the merits of the Lord Christ by personal satisfaction. Penance is the one weapon at our disposal. Throughout life we must play the un-

lovely part of self-appointed executioners, and chastise these bodies of sin, bringing them by pain and self-denial under subjection to the spirit. There is no other way under Heaven of making the soul ready for that ineffable union in force between God and the saints. The cross teaches us resignation, content with our lot in life, and superhuman patience in the midst of poverty and pain. And the larger half of holiness consists in laboriously trudging along in the bleeding footsteps of Christ. We must suffer, we must die. It is a law of our nature, it is the penalty of original sin, and as unavoidable as the air we breathe. Let us not be heathens; but, like true sons of God, let us accept these crosses with joy, as gifts from the hand of a fond Father. Let us keep ready on our lips in all the emergencies of life these sublimely sweet words of St. Andrew, "Good cross of Christ, that borrowed the splendor of pearls from the body of the Lord; my heart's desire; my single love; thou burden of a lifetime's longing; I hail thee ready prepared at last for my greedy soul. Bear me away in thy embraces from among men, and set me down at the side of my Master. On thee, as on a bed of pain, He purchased me from hell; from thee, as from a bed of pain, May He vouchsafe to receive me into His arms."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Romans 8; 18–23 *Gospel, St. Luke 5; 1–11*

"Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing."
—St. Luke 5, 5.

Purity of intention would seem to be the moral lesson urged by the Master in this morning's incident, and purity of intention is singleness of purpose. It is that simplicity of eye, so much commended in the Gospel as rendering the whole body simple. Work accompanied by purity of intention, is fishing under the direction of the Lord Christ; work without it is wanton waste in the Kingdom of God; it is laboring all the night and taking nothing. Purity of heart paves the way for purity of intention, and is an indispensable requisite for the possession of this blessed quality in any marked degree. Hence the zeal and ardor displayed by the saints in the acquisition of this virtue. In the school of holiness it is the golden principle equal to the solution of whatever problem presents itself to the soul. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; union with God compassed by purity of heart is wisdom's accomplishment and consummation. In any department of science theories that disregard facts are bound to fail. The science of the spiritual life is no exception to the rule. We are embarked in this particular field of investigation, and we want to carry away from this study principles able with God's grace and our own honest endeavors to keep us right for a lifetime. Among the many facts to which we must pay the homage of careful attention one stands out prominently. I refer to the fact that we all have a history. We are not today what we were ten years ago, either physically or morally. The miracles of change introduced into our bodies during a single decade are without number, and absolutely be-

yond our comprehension. But, numerous and unintelligible as these changes of body are, they dwindle into insignificance, when set side by side and compared with the revolutions that have had place in the more secret recesses of our souls. And, what is worst of all, one set of changes causes most of us as little concern as the other. We are as careless about noting the successive phases of our soul's growth in good or evil as we are about noting the vegetative phenomena of life in our bodies. And this neglect is lamentable in the extreme. It is one of the fruitful causes, I was going to say the principal cause, of our mediocrity in virtue. When some bodily disease or functional disorder shows head, we at once consult a physician. He subjects us to a thorough examination, discovers the seat of the trouble, applies remedies and, unless the ailment is too deep-seated for medicine or the knife, soon has the machine running again as of yore. But not so with our souls. No outsider can be called in to sound its depths, put his finger on the affected part and work a radical cure. If physicians of souls were as ready to hand, and as knowing as medical doctors in their own sphere, we should, perhaps, be willing to incur the expense needed to keep our souls in good condition. But the trouble of the thing is that in spiritual matters most of the work falls on ourselves, and no man living can help us, unless we do more than half the job ourselves.

We have a history, I say, and events are daily going on within us, important events that deserve more study and attention than they get at our hands. Thanks to our laziness and negligence in this detail of watchfulness over self, we are grown enigmas to ourselves, and we are strangely ignorant of our interiors. We are, spiritually speaking, what we have made ourselves; and, after years of experience in the spiritual life, we know less about ourselves than we really ought to know. And in the science of the saints no earthly good can come of learning or applying principles, unless we first acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the exact condition of our hearts. As well might a doctor, without any examination of patients, without any preliminary diagnosis at all, apply castor oil, or paregoric, or whatever else, in every case presented to him for treatment. The absurdity is evident, when physic is in question. It is no less evident, though taken

into far less account, when remedies for the soul's disorders are being chosen. And yet it remains as true in the one case as in the other that no cure can be effected, unless the patient's dispositions and symptoms are first discovered and given due prominence. Spirituality resides in the heart, and our hearts, if the saying is not too rude, are messes of confusion. We cannot even hope to do anything with ourselves in a spiritual way, unless we turn these hearts of ours inside out, and get an abiding, practical knowledge of the mysteries they contain. It may be all very well to talk about humility, and charity, and patience, and zeal, and every other virtue; but the first grand requisite for achieving holiness is to know ourselves. Otherwise, we may hammer away for a year at some one or two virtues, and suddenly discover, as if by accident, that in the meantime some little devil, of whom we never thought, has been working havoc in the kingdom of our souls, and rendering useless all our labor. Drive the devils out; and, to drive them out, you must first know them, who and what they are.

"There is in us a very depth of malice, which we do not perceive, because we never seriously examine our own interior." That's the verdict of Lallemant, an eminent guide in the way of holiness. "All the people are gone wrong, because there is no one that thinks in his heart," is the plain way in which Jeremias puts the same plain truth. And we know it, we tail-enders in the procession know that the secret of our failure is wrapped up somewhere in forgetfulness and ignorance of self. Study of self, deep, unremitting study is the remedy, and the whole process ends in what we call purity of heart. Absolute purity of heart is the entire absence of anything and everything within, opposed in the smallest degree to God and the working of His grace. This blessed state of freedom from whatever constitutes an impediment to the free action of the Holy Ghost within us, is after all the essential difference between a sinner and a saint. The grace of God, like God Himself, is omnipotent; and it fails of effect in some of us only because we stupidly set up barriers through which it refuses to break, over which it cannot with dignity climb. This is so true that the old guide above referred to, Lallemant, hesitates not to say that "the shortest and surest way to perfection is to study purity of

heart, rather than the exercise of virtues." Get your hearts ready, then, and the virtues will take care of themselves. In the quiet of the chapel, or at your own desk, often devote a whole hour to this study of your own interior. It is hard work, it is disagreeable work; but it is none the less necessary, none the less rich in results. The devil hates purity of heart, he obstructs every movement we make towards its acquisition. He derives no great worry from the scattered acts of virtue we perform. In fact, to divert us from our real business, watchfulness over our interior, he sometimes assumes a pleasing shape and spurs us on to the doing of some good deed. But he is sore hurt, when we seriously look into our hearts, examine the depths of their malice and take steps to eradicate disorders. To conduct this examination with profit you must be honest with yourselves. Though every man's heart is a network of desires, ambitions, schemes; though it fosters preposterous ideas and wrong judgments without number; the heart's owner holds the key to its secrets, and the heart's owner can with a small amount of labor dispel the darkness and overspread the labyrinth with light. Man is an enigma to himself, only because he is ashamed of the possible revelations honest enquiry would be sure to unfold, or because he is too eternally lazy to take the trouble, too greedy of comfort to take the time demanded. Just give the suggestion a few fair trials, and notice with what good results it is attended.

In the light of the sanctuary, in the capacity of a man really and truly consecrated to God by virtue of his baptismal promises, search your hearts and see what thoughts, sentiments, tastes and ambitions you will discover out of harmony with your holy profession, your bonded promise to Almighty God. The study must fill you with wonder, and discovery after discovery must dawn upon you in the nature of a new surprise. First, count, if you can, the innumerable venial sins to which you are naturally subject. Then note the disorderly movements born in your heart, when it beats out of tune with your destiny as a creature of God and a Christian. After acquiring a certain facility in these two preliminary steps, you can begin to experience ease in regularly calling yourself to account, in challenging every intruder that flashes across your mind, and forbidding resi-

dence to every thought not conducive to progress in holiness. Afterwards, familarity with the sound of God's voice will result, and you will infallibly find the ears of your heart awake and open to every whisper of the good spirit, to every inspiration vouchsafed you in mercy. Our mortal sins are as prominent in our thoughts as the mountain in a landscape, or a ship's searchlight in the surrounding dark. People of the world sometimes contrive to blind themselves to the presence of even mortal sin; devout people, never. In the matter, however, of blindness to venial sin some of us are not far behind worldlings. We daily roll up the number of these petty crimes; and, in spite of the fact that they are offenses against the God we are solemnly pledged to love, we seldom deem it necessary even to count them. Venial sin is far from being the trifle some reckon it. To be persuaded of this, you need only advert again to the historical instances of its punishment. When tempted to make light of venial sin, think of Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt for a momentary curiosity; of Moses dying on Nebo in sight of the Promised Land for a small want of confidence; of the prophet devoured by a lion for eating and drinking against orders when hungry and thirsty; of the 50,070 Bethsamites slain for an irreverent look at the Ark; of Oza killed for stretching out his hand to steady the Ark; of David and the 70,000 men of Israel cut down for the taking of a census, for what we should rate a pardonable pride; of Eliseus and the 42 boys eaten by bears for mockery; of Ananias and Saphira, dead at Peter's feet for concealment of the truth in no very important matter. Venial sin is a monster; and, if our hearts are choked tight with venial sins, they are howling wildernesses, into which the Spirit of God will not enter to display all the riches of His mercy. We cannot expect God to deal familiarly with us, we cannot expect Him to be on the same terms of intimacy with us as He is with His saints, unless we first rid ourselves of habitual venial sin and noticeably reduce the number of these lesser transgressions. And we are never in the nature of things going to rid ourselves entirely of them, we are never going to reduce their number, unless we first make a careful study of our hearts, wake up to the reality of their presence and discover their hiding-places.

Venial sin ought to be more easily stamped out than mortal sin. It has not for passion the same dreadfully insinuating characteristics mortal sin has. It spreads no particularly attractive feast, it is not like unholy pleasure, exhilarating to distraction. Its power for harm comes principally from its apparent want of importance. Its strength is centred altogether in its weakness, and in our own insensate blindness to its ruinous and damaging character. Once persuade yourself of its importance, once convince yourself by sober examination of its pestilential prevalence in your heart, and the work is done; reform is easy, reform is inevitable.

And, then, about the disorder reigning in your affections! What a field for investigation! What a row of weeds to be hoed out! What a colossal monument to our folly! To appreciate the damage done purity of heart by irregular movements of that faculty we have for loving, you need only reflect that multiplicity of purpose is its arch-enemy. We are bundles of loves; and, in spite of the complete surrender we thought we made of ourselves at our conversion, we find after years of work in the school of holiness a thousand and one different objects clamoring for our love. How often these objects effect a lodgment in our affections, and crowd out the God to whom we swore absolute and unconditional fealty, each heart knows. With the devout only one love is legitimate, the love of God and His glory. Every other love without a single exception is contraband, and bound to work the soul harm. Count if you can the schemes that daily pass through your brain, the little contrivances you have for winning applause with the world and your brethren, the plans you devise for securing the good will and esteem of your friends, the air-castles of present or future ease and comfort you build for yourselves, the purely natural attachments you form and foster for persons, places and employments. Remark, too, that God and God's glory play no very important part in these schemes, plans and castles. Oh, if all our aspirations were of such sort that we could with dignity offer them to God, mix God up with them, refer them in some way to God's glory, everything would still be right. But they are not always of that precise kind. When thoughts of ease and comfort are knocking at our hearts for entrance, God

is out of the game; we practically behave as if God were gone a long journey from home, and were ignorant of our very existence. When sinful attachments are uppermost in our thoughts, we hate to hear the Angelus ring, we are ashamed of God's universal presence, and, to at all proceed with the work, we must for a while banish God from our little kingdom. Then, watch over your loves. Cast the illegitimate out. They are weights on your wings. They are loads on your hearts, and in their company you cannot go with ease to God. One thing is necessary, one thing is lawful, to love God. Come to a sharp understanding with yourself on this point, and, if need be, call the spirit of faith to your assistance. Force yourself to sincerely and honestly acknowledge that you believe without any reservation in the paramount importance of loving God alone, that the indulgence of any other love, however trifling it may appear to be, is waste of time, an insult to the infinite majesty of God, and the seed of eternal ruin. It will prove no idle occupation to devote an hour now and then to taking an inventory of your loves, to labelling them and carefully cataloguing them for future reference. Far from it. This is the only effective way of finally tearing up by the roots all disorderly affections, and establishing that purity of heart, without which sanctity is simply impossible.

Another point, to which I would invite serious attention is the number and variety of thoughts admitted daily into the workshop of your mind. They are feeders for the desires and loves of which we have just spoken, and are, of course, as responsible for the wrong done purity of heart as the loves and desires themselves. Our minds ought to be taken up entirely and exclusively with God. If religious consecration means anything, it means this. Consecration means special dedication to the service of God. Chalices are profaned, when used for any function other than that of Holy Mass. Our minds by our baptismal promises are as much consecrated to God as chalices by the prayer of the Bishop, and they are profaned by vulgar uses. In olden times men ran away from the noise and distraction of large cities to bury themselves in the silence and solitude of the desert, not precisely because they were enamoured of quiet or impatient of business, but simply and solely to hold

their minds more completely and more entirely to the task of dwelling exclusively on God's presence. We can admire their zeal, our manner of life forbids us to imitate it. Our vocation is other, and keeps us whirling all day long in a storm-centre of rush, and confusion, and work for the neighbor. But purity of heart is going to suffer, unless we take precautions against being swallowed up in the turmoil of business. We make our interiors noisier than they need be by introducing a multitude of stray thoughts that are neither profitable, nor necessary, nor becoming. Have you ever caught yourselves at solemn moments of prayer or devotion, when recollection would seem to be easiest, have you ever caught yourselves indulging a train of fancies ludicrous in the extreme? Have you ever suddenly started up to find yourselves miles away in thought from where you were sitting or kneeling? These flights of the imagination would be amusing, if they were not so hostile to progress in virtue. Viewed in their proper light, they are misfortunes, and they are insensibly robbing us of spiritual strength and of all chance to acquire that purity of heart which is a passport to the company of God's friends. What bearing, after all, have these empty imaginings on our eternal destiny? They certainly are not helps to its accomplishment, and in no few cases they are downright hindrances. They may sometimes afford innocent recreation to the mind, but they are not by half so sweet as the hours of converse saints enjoy with God. Such idle musings as turn on the time of day at the other side of the world, where perhaps some friend sojourns, on the present probable occupation of folks at home while we are miles away, the greetings we are going to receive at our return, the changes we are going to notice, and so on down the list. Such idle musings, I say, are humiliating proofs of our inconstancy in good, of the fatigue we experience in carrying the sweet yoke of God's service, and they make men feel ashamed of themselves. They cannot but sometimes make men feel that it would be better, as far as holiness is concerned, to never have had a home at all, to never have had friends, and to have a faculty as capable of forgetting the past, as the memory is of remembering it. But this proneness to conjure up empty pictures of the kind will forever remain a fact, and

to keep it in check is a problem that consummate saints have already solved, a problem that beginners must endeavor to satisfactorily settle. Purity of heart, as long as this inclination is indulged, is out of the question. God's whispers come and go in the soul without leaving any trace of their merciful visit, and the Holy Spirit's power for good is shortened. We must make our own the art of loving God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind. The religious mechanic carries thought of God with him to the workshop. The religious work-girl turns work into prayer, and, seated at desk or counter, renders God the acknowledgment which is His due. The pen of the religious poet is tipped with thoughts of God. He simply cannot keep God out of his lines. And in the golden poetry of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." I Cor. 10, 31.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 St. Peter 3; 8–15 *Gospel, St. Matthew 5; 20–24*

"Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."
—St. Matthew 5, 20.

The Scribes and the Pharisees were sects among the Jews, more remarkable for a certain appearance of piety than for inner holiness of life. In the eyes of men they were just perfect. They kept all the Laws; they fasted, and prayed, and gave abundant alms. But the eyes of God discovered in their hollow hearts traces of a crime, that changed them to devils. They were insincere, they were hypocrites. Under pretense of loving God, they were loving themselves to God's injury; they were sacrificing God's interests on the altar of their own selfishness. And so artfully withal did they conceal their depravity, that neighbors came to regard them as other Moses and other Daniels. They held fast to the letter of the law, utterly neglecting its spirit. They never raised a hand to commit murder, but in the secrecy of their hearts they hated their enemies with a hatred worthy of hell. They carefully avoided giving offense to men, but they little heeded giving offense to God. In one short word, they made the good esteem of men the measure and test of moral worth. They made the same gross mistake, that is at present rapidly taking possession of men's minds. Modern education, the education that prevails today outside of Catholic schools and colleges, aims at elevating human nature by establishing as sole motive for the fulfilment of duty the praise and the applause of men. And the fruits of the sad mistake are everywhere painfully evident in suicide, sin and dishonesty. The world will never become honest, or true, unless men determine to watch over their hearts as well as their hands; unless they determine to satisfy the

obligations imposed on them by an unseen, but omnipotent Master and Judge. We are men of many expedients; and, if escape from detection once comes to be regarded as virtue, why the world will perish in crime. The world, to be saved, must be taught to think that no less vigilant a guardian than the all-seeing eye of God can on every single occasion hold men to virtue. The world must be taught to think that a man is neither more nor less in this matter of morality than he is in the sight of God. The world must be taught to think that we are here to work out our salvation along lines independent of what our fellow men may say, or think, or do. To enter into the kingdom of Heaven, our justice must abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Their justice was defective in many respects, but I venture to think that its three most pernicious features were ostentatious pride, genteel hypocrisy and stubborn adherence to error. And your up-to-date Pharisee is infected with the same triple disease. Good conceit of self, exclusive cultivation of outward appearances with no regard for the heart, and wholesale sacrifice of truth to motives of interest, like energetic demons, whipped the ancient Pharisees from persecution of the prophets to the murder of God Almighty Himself. And the same demons are today driving their modern imitators to crimes seemingly less repulsive, but none the less worthy of eternal reprobation.

Stubborn adherence to error, wholesale sacrifice of dogma to motives of interest are today making in the world of men's hearts the same sad havoc they worked centuries ago in the hearts of the Pharisees. Religious indifferentism is a pestilential plague, and its blighting influence begins to be felt in the household of the true faith. Yes, Catholics, false to the traditions of their Church, reproaches to the rich blood of the martyrs, descend to the meanness of thinking, even if they hesitate to openly say, that one Church or one set of beliefs is as good as another. It is a grievous sin, a direct insult to Almighty God, to entertain opinions of this sort. I should stand in dread of God's avenging anger, if I ever by word or deed influenced anybody to think for a moment that salvation can be found outside of the Church of Christ. Only one Church is the true Church, and every other form of worship

must be wrong. Jesus Christ did not come down from Heaven to establish a Church, and then leave men free to enter that Church or not, as they pleased. Jesus Christ is not so indifferent to the truth as to teach me one thing, and teach my neighbor the exact opposite; to teach me that He is really and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist, and to teach my neighbor that He is not there present; to teach me that marriage is so sacred a thing that death alone can separate husband and wife, and to teach my neighbor that a court of law can for trifling reasons declare null and void this holiest of contracts, and leave the man and woman free to choose other partners. Jesus Christ is God, and Jesus Christ would not be God, yea He would not be the sort of man we respect, the man of honor and of honesty, could He be guilty of such self-contradiction. One Church, then, is not so good as another; and the creed we adopt in this life is going to make a big difference in the destiny in store for us after death. Hell and Heaven depend in large measure on the choice of Church we make. If a man wilfully puts himself outside of the path Christ has appointed men to keep, that man has only his own perverseness to blame, if he walks into hell. Belief is not a mere matter of thought and fancy, it is a question of doing; and, if a man refuses to believe, for instance, that confession made to a priest is necessary for salvation, why, as a natural consequence, he is not going to make his confession to a priest, and he is going to live and die without ever taking advantage of a help that, in God's sweet providence and according to the explicit declaration of Christ, is the sinner's only hope. Were one Church as good as another, the lives of the martyrs would be monuments to folly. Rather than utter a word against the faith of their fathers, rather than lift the hand to take part in a false worship, they bowed their heads to the swords of pagan Rome and the axes of Protestant England. Yea, were one Church as good as another, the death of Christ Himself was a mistake; for, besides dying for the redemption of mankind, He died and rose again from the dead to establish His Church on the ruins of Judaism.

The chief priests of the Jews would have been the first to take up the defense of Christ's cause, had He proclaimed

one religion as good as another; and the Pharisees would have acknowledged Him for leader, had He taught that mere outward respectability is the badge of holiness and a passport to the Kingdom of God. But we know from history that Christ told the chief priests of the Jews no such thing, neither did He flatter the Pharisees; but He scourged the one class and the other with language incalculably more severe than any He ever addressed to the vilest and most degraded sinner. The woman taken in adultery He saved from death at the hands of the mob by an expedient on which none but God could hit. He told Mary Magdalene, who, before she washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, had been a public sinner, that her name would be praised wherever and as long as His gospel would be read in the whole world. But the chief priests and the Pharisees He denounced as a generation of vipers, as blind leaders leading the blind, as canting hypocrites, as whitened sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful to men, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness; yea, this same Lord of mercy and forgiveness once solemnly declared that there is only one sort of sin, which cannot be pardoned in this life or the next, the sin of men and women who wilfully close their eyes to the light of truth, and reject the doctrine He confirmed by so many wondrous signs. The man of sacrilege, the murderer, the thief, the man sunken in impurity, can still hope for pardon; but the man who to the end remains outside of the true Church through his own fault cannot hope for the same favor here or hereafter. He has deliberately placed himself outside the reach of God's pity, and God's pity is infinite. Final impenitence is of its very nature unforgivable, and obstinacy in religious error is the sin against the Holy Ghost. St. Matthew 12, 32. While a breath of life remains in a man's body, there is still a chance for salvation; but this chance in the case of a hardened heretic is so small that Jesus Christ Himself declared it no chance at all; and Jesus Christ as God uttered no empty threats, and Jesus Christ as God weighed well every statement He made.

Morality without a fixed standard, independent of human whims and notions, is an impossibility. Morality with no authoritative teacher, able to compel conscience, is as ridiculous

a something as religion without dogma; and one monster feels at ease only in the other's company. Our system of godless education is turning out a generation of citizens destined soon or late to do our republic to death. Instruction without piety, without faith, sets loose on the world a brood of polished thieves, polished libertines, whose good conduct is no deeper than the surface, who halt at no crime, if only they can hide it from the light. Anarchy is the natural, the logical offspring of godlessness and poverty. Godlessness when combined with wealth can tolerate authority, because government secures their possessions to the rich, and money can bribe power to be sparing of its burdens. Poverty when not divorced from virtue is a blessing, and the virtuous poor are ever on the side of law and order, because they are as greedy of this jewel in Christ's crown as the miser is of his gold. They are as proud of this badge of Christ's true followers as kings are of their title and sceptre. But a mixture of godlessness and poverty is poison. It works its dark way through the avenues of life to the heart, and ends in death. It grinds, and gnaws, and bites, till it makes its victim ready for conspiracy, treason, murder. Poverty unchecked by piety goads its slaves to the excesses of anarchy, excesses marked by the seeming fearlessness of martyrdom, and the madness of fanaticism. Europe is in the throes of a death-agony, because she has for centuries spurned this truth aside. Her lawmakers have persistently striven to reduce God's presence in His universe to a memory, and they are reaping a rich harvest of discontent among the masses, they are arraying the people against the king, they are maintaining authority in lands ripe for rebellion at the expense of huge standing armies, that must eventually sap the nations' strength. And may the God of pity open the eyes of our legislators to the truth. May the God of justice, in return for honest, fair and square America's tolerance and encouragement of the true religion, awaken our beloved country's sleeping sentinels to the existence of danger. In godless education we have a hiding volcano, slowly but surely gathering fire and force for future destructive sallies.

The war is already on. Capital and labor are gripped in deadly combat, and anarchy is waving its ghost-like arms over the combatants, or hovering like a bird of prey over the field.

Whichever side wins, anarchy remains a menace; and till men's hearts are purged by faith and religion of anarchy's foul taint, our land is insecure, our freedom is a mockery, our prosperity is a hallucination, and God's loveliest daughter among the nations, wrested by our fathers from the rough fist of tyranny, is marching down to the valley of sacrifice. The true remedy for crime, rests not in clapping into jail this or that individual, rests not in leading any single murderer to the block to expiate his folly. The disease is too deep set to be successfully met and cured by any such superficial and sporadic efforts. Education is the remedy, education of the right sort, education with God and faith for corner-stone and foundation. Shorten the grown up anarchist's power for harm by chains and the strong walls of a prison; remove him from the body politic, if you will. But you have your pains for nought, if you neglect to guard against a recurrence of the evil by equipping the youth of the land with reverence for God and reverence for God's fair daughter, authority. God is the author of all good government; and, unless God keeps watch and ward over His work, it falls to ruins. Banish God from the schools, and you invite disaster. Confound mere instruction with education, and you start out on a wrong basis, you are journeying towards loss.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Romans 6; 3–11 *Gospel, St. Mark 8; 1–10*

"I have compassion on the multitude, they have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat."

—St. Mark 8, 2.

In today's Gospel we are introduced to a personage, whose life, the world must acknowledge, had a more lasting and a more saving influence on the history of mankind than the lives of all the so-called heroes, who before or since lived their little day and died. In today's Gospel we are invited to assist in spirit at a scene full of instructive pathos. The personage is none other than the Saviour Himself. The event is the conquest divine grace won over the honest and warm hearts of His first followers. Jesus Christ, a man clothed with all the majesty of God, is deep in the work of His public ministry in Judea. Some months ago He bade adieu to the roof of His Virgin Mother Mary, and, intensely about His Heavenly Father's business, set on foot a movement, that, eclipsing all other movements, has made the irreligious world wonder since, and will make it wonder till time is no more. He confined His operations to a very limited extent of territory, and the opening pages of the Gospel are standing proof of how apparently insignificant a beginning the Church and the kingdom of Jesus Christ had. He labored for the short space of three years, and, in spite of the circumstance that He all the while labored along lines wholly at variance with the methods human shortsightedness considers wisest, He succeeded as only Omnipotence could succeed in laying broad and deep the foundations of His one true Church, against which the combined powers of earth and hell cannot and shall not prevail. He died on a cross; and, strange to say, that emblem, which had before

been the sign and the symbol of everything shameful, gained favor in the minds of men; and today the architect, who would build a temple for the worship of the Creator, has not finished his work till the cross is planted on its topmost pinnacle; and today the cross is what nestles closest to the hearts of men and women, whose thoughts are holiest and worthiest; and today the tired eyes of dying saints the world over feel the gloom of death settle down upon them, as they labor to trace in the gathering darkness the dim outlines of the image of the Crucified.

But this and the many other wondrous changes wrought by the Son of God in man's ideals owe their origin to the activity of Divine Energy, and they have withstood all the buffets of time, to which merely human revolutions succumb, only because they are stamped all over with the vitality of divine eternity. Only God could attempt and effect such results, and only God, in whose hands are the hearts and the destinies of men, could have obtained for His cause such a hearing. His enemies slightingly referred to Him as the man from Galilee, the son of the carpenter; and yet, whenever He paused to preach in Judea, He always had an audience of attentive listeners, His earnest eyes always rested on a band of faithful men and women, who recognised His divinity and hung on His every word. There was a something in His countenance that spoke of Heaven. A man's soul, they say, is always peeping out through his eyes; and a man's character is discernible in his bearing and carriage. The soul of Christ was the receptacle of God's thoughts, and God's thoughts are necessarily of the sublimest. The body of Christ was the veritable dwelling place of the Godhead, and dignity is as essential to God as life and unending duration. In the limited experience of a short lifetime who has not met somewhere on the street, at a public gathering, along a country road, at home or abroad, a form that passed and left somehow or other on the memory an impression that years cannot destroy? It may have been the towering figure of a man standing head and shoulders over the crowd, with honesty and ambition apparent in every line of his features, and, over all, the pervading influence of religion and faith. It may have been the angel countenance of a

boy or girl unacquainted with the fouller things of sin, age's peculiar property and gruesome possession. It may have been the peaceful look of a young man or young woman in the world but not of it, alive with suggestions of innocence meant for pledges of our belief that virtue has not yet abandoned the earth, and that God's vision, as it sweeps over this universe of things, can still find objects that are a source of rest to His eyes. But the beauty and the attractiveness of Jesus Christ, as He walked the fields of Judea nearly 1900 years ago, were far in excess of anything we can even imagine. Our standards of comparison are human and limited. The charms of His person, the characteristics of His heart were divine and infinite.

The fairest of mortals have periods of wrinkling worry, and the best of men are good only by fits and starts. We love to-day what we are going to hate intensely tomorrow; and the benevolent man, who drops a penny to some beggar, would perhaps pass that beggar with a curse, if accosted in one of his moods. Our good qualities are as shifting and as changeable as the wind; we are born to undergo a succession of changes, and a man subject to no change is no man at all. But Jesus Christ had all the stability of character and all the consequent persistence in well-doing that God vindicates to Himself. He was superior to what we call trials and troubles. No amount of physical suffering, and His life was full to overflowing with sorrow, ever wrung from Him a tear. No amount of contradiction, contempt or disappointment operated to rob him of equanimity and cheerfulness. To this truly remarkable circumstance, coupled with the fact that every word He uttered was of divine origin and conveyed principles that emanated from the fountain-head of wisdom itself, must be ascribed His overwhelming success as a teacher, and the wonderful influence He exerted over the length and breadth of Judea for three years. He was God; and, because God is the absolute master of all creation, He had all the forces of nature at His disposal, and could stamp His utterances with the seal of divinity by the performance of the most stupendous miracles.

In today's Gospel one such is recorded, and it may be well to remark in passing that nearly all of Christ's miracles were

prompted by feelings of compassion and pity for individuals or for the multitude, and were performed for the benefit of persons already attached to His cause or on the point of attaching themselves to it, and following Him to the end. There are, of course, some exceptions to this rule; but, when Christ worked miracles for the benefit of enemies, He did so with one of two purposes, either to win them to friendship or, in the event of failure, to rob them of every pretext for excuse, and so overwhelmingly confirm His divinity and His divine mission that dishonesty alone and insincerity could be ground for unbelief. This reflection should be to God-fearing men and women, to men and women, who today stand forth the champions of the same Jesus Christ's cause, a subject of uninterrupted comfort; and should be, as it is, to the irreligious, to the infidels, to the half-hearted doubters, with whom the world today literally teems, a subject of perpetual unquiet, and dread, and ill concealed fear. For Jesus Christ in the Scripture, the authentic record of His lifework, is today appealing to us as forcibly as He appealed to the men and women of Judea 1900 years ago. Jesus Christ is today working miracles, not quite so apparent to the senses, perhaps, as the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but yet none the less real and true, and wondrous. In the Mass about to be said Jesus Christ through the agency of a priest will change a wafer of bread into His own sacred body and a cup of wine into His own adorable blood. This certainly is a miracle, in comparison with which the multiplication of the loaves and fishes dwindles into insignificance. And yet, in spite of the fact that this prodigy is daily enacted on thousands of Catholic altars in every Catholic land, you and I know people foolhardy enough to neglect God's interests in their life-plans, and rash enough to refuse service to the Christ who will one day come in the clouds of Heaven to judge the living and the dead, to summon His friends forever to Heaven and condemn His enemies forever to hell. You and I know men and women who give to their Bible the most prominent place on their parlor-table, and yet live as indifferent to the teachings of the Bible as if Christ had never come down from Heaven to preach; who trample under foot the Bible's most sacred dogmas and entertain doubts con-

cerning its most unmistakable utterances. Self-interest and self-convenience are the explanation of this unseemly conduct. It is difficult to convince a thief of the wrong resident in theft. It is difficult to convince a man wholly bent on pleasure and enjoyment that the royal road of the cross is the only safe way to Heaven. It is hard to convince the proud man of sin that humble confession made to God's priest is the only Heaven-appointed remedy left for sin, and the only means of salvation at man's disposal after the white robe of Baptism has been once soiled. The preachers of the word can thunder God's message into the ears of these men and women, God Himself can and does whisper most sweetly and most mysteriously to their hearts; but, when all is done, these men and women still remain absolute masters of their destiny. They have good and bad set before them, and can choose what they will. If they prefer to walk the rough way of God's Commandments, God will put His hand in theirs and walk at their side, to hold them up and lead them along. If they prefer to press the rose-strewn way that winds through sinful pleasures down to the depths of hell, God has not promised to impede their progress, but will let them have their own sweet way and journey to the death of which they are enamoured. God speaks to them in the Scripture, God has established a Church and equipped it with servant-teachers, whom He has most solemnly promised to shield forever from error. He uses these teachers as mouthpieces of His will, and they so faithfully discharge their duty that the honest-minded believers in Christ cannot complain of obscurity or ignorance in the matter of what things are to be done and what things are to be avoided that an eternity of bliss may be their portion forever. The doctrine Christ teaches commends itself for the heavenly wisdom and entire agreement with the plain dictates of reason apparent in its every principle. But, as though these qualities would prove weak and ineffectual in winning the hearts of men to its adoption, Jesus Christ besides stamped His teaching with all the authority derivable from the dread prerogative of miracles.

All know what a miracle is. It is, in a few words, any physical and visible effect that has God for author after such a manner that no force of unaided nature is equal to the result.

It is an occurrence in open contradiction with the established laws of nature. The multiplication of the five loaves and the fishes is an illustration, that will best of all, perhaps, explain what we mean by a miracle. Ordinarily five loaves of bread and two fishes would hardly supply the wants of twenty robust and hungry men. When, therefore, Jesus Christ with five loaves and two fishes satisfied the hunger of four thousand men, to say nothing of the women and children in the crowd, we are justified in saying that Christ worked a miracle, we are justified in saying that Jesus Christ performed a deed most emphatically the deed of a God and far beyond the power of any mere man. But it is not my intention to enter into a discussion of the nature and exclusively divine origin of miracles. The wonderful fact narrated in today's Gospel is part of the records of history, of history, too, which the enemies of Jesus Christ and His Church must acknowledge to be the most reliable and the most universally accepted in all the records of time. The Sacred Scripture has withstood the attacks of two thousand years, and will continue to be read and pondered years after the bones of the malicious doubters, who today scoff at its truthfulness, lie mouldering in the grave. And year after year, as long as the world lasts, this history of the multiplication of the loaves will be read from every pulpit in the land, and some preacher of God will derive from it lessons full of instruction and consolation for the faithful, who in spite of temptation cleave to God and repose all their trust in God's promises.

I am not so much concerned with the miracle itself as I am with the wonderful compassion of Jesus Christ, that elicited the miracle, and with the ardent enthusiasm of that crowd of men and women, which made them forget the wants of the body in their eagerness to hear the Son of God speak as man never spoke before. Recollect that these four thousand men were so captivated by the charms of Christ's personality and by the warmth of His eloquence, that they abandoned home and everything, and for three days followed at His heels, merely to be present when He halted at some convenient spot, and poured forth in a resistless torrent words that at once appealed to the heart and conveyed lessons that instinct taught to be right. Picture

to yourselves, if you can, the love swimming in Christ's eyes, as on the third day He turned and contemplated this devoted multitude of men, women and children, and reflected that for His sake they were enduring the pangs of hunger. Verily, as the Gospel says, He had compassion on them, and determined to perform a prodigy that would serve the double purpose of strengthening the faith of future Christians in His divinity, and of procuring for these good souls a meal that would prevent them from fainting on their way home. The consternation of the apostles at the question of Jesus with regard to the possibility of feeding that immense and famished throng, can be readily imagined. But their anxiety was only momentary, and entirely disappeared when Jesus blessed the bread, and broke, and ordered them to distribute it among the people, seated in rows upon the green grass of the hillside. When after the feast these same apostles discovered that the remnants filled twelve baskets, they must have felt satisfied that their cause was God's cause, and that, in exchanging their earthly possessions for the friendship of their leader Jesus Christ, they were making a very favourable bargain. Our sentiments on the occasion should be nowise different from those of the apostles. We should rejoice and be glad, because He, in whose cause we as Catholics are enlisted for weal or woe, is the man-God Jesus Christ, the compassionate author of the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes. We as Catholics verily belong to God's people, and God's people will not suffer, when at the last day the leader of God's people distributes His rewards. Poverty, and sorrow, and toil, and contempt, may be our lot, as they were the lot of Jesus Christ Himself, during the few years of our sojourn upon earth. But in Heaven the heat of the sun is not oppressive, the cold is not pinching, hate is unknown, love is the occupation of eternity, the streets are paved with a wealth of gold, and at the entrance-gate God our Father stands ready to wipe away all tears from the eyes of sons who sowed in agony and pain on earth, to reap in joy forever in Heaven.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Romans 6; 19–23 *Gospel, St. Matthew 7; 15–21*

"Beware of false prophets."
—St. Matthew 7, 15.

This solemn warning is fuller of present significance than most men imagine. The world of today is crowded thick with false prophets, and no country under the sun offers a more congenial environment or home to false prophets than our own. Freedom of worship, our proudest boast, fosters and encourages in the field of religion every wild fancy of a disordered brain, every hypocritical scheme for the accumulation of money, every attempt of insatiate passion to cut loose from the laws of God. Small need to enumerate the hundreds of sects that find a home in these parts. A glance at the statistics of religious denominations, compiled and published every ten years by our Census Bureau, must satisfy the most incredulous that, in point of variety and absurdity of so-called churches, these United States can give odds to the world and win with ease. Every preacher of doctrine at variance with that of Christ, as propounded and set forth by the Catholic Church, is a false prophet; and we Catholics must shut our ears to his teaching. Every neighbor, who by word or example endeavors to lessen our love for Catholic dogma or Catholic practice, is a false prophet; and we must be defiant of his baneful influence. In the company of men we must be proud of our faith, and we must meet scoffers with the scorn born of stout courage, strengthened by consciousness of the divinity of our Church.

We Catholics have a cause worthy of men's supremest effort. We have a flag always unfurled, the rallying point of every brave and honest heart in history. We have a leader, vested with characteristics that need only be known to be ap-

preciated, more alluringly grand than any that ever yet fell to the lot of man. Our cause is the growth of truth and justice in the world; our flag is the banner of the Sacred Heart of God; our Leader is Christ Himself watching His forces from the battlements of Heaven, and directing their movements through the agency of His Vicar and spokesman on earth, our Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius XI. Catholicity is our cause. Its doctrine is the embodiment of divine truth. Its laws are the echo of divine justice. Its supremacy means the establishment of truth and justice in the world, the restoration of mankind to its true dignity, emancipation from the slavery of hell and passion, the accomplishment of peace here and eternal happiness hereafter, victory over the devil, human nature's sworn enemy and most deadly foe. We are embarked in an undertaking, more of a blessing to the race than the liberation of oppressed colonies, more glorious than any conquest ever won by historic captains, more humane than any measure ever advocated by a statesman. Our cause is the only cause in all history that enlisted the sympathy of God to such an extent that He left His throne in Heaven to personally conduct the campaign.

Our Church began to be born that day the Lord Christ uttered in Peter's favor these momentous words of prophecy, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church." Under Christ's fostering care it slowly assumed shape. Its first preachers, the apostles, had the advantage of daily intercourse with Him. They copied His Heavenly conduct, they cherished the wisdom of His Heavenly doctrine. They watched Him perform stupendous miracles, heard Him instruct the people, and listened to His explanation of the parables, scattered like flowers over the field of the gospels. After His glorious resurrection, during those forty days of miracle, and mystery, and gladness, they enjoyed yet closer converse with Him, and gathered from His lips every minuter detail for the establishment, the government and the propagation of His kingdom on earth. Commissioned by Him to go into the whole world, preaching everywhere the doctrine and the terms of salvation, these apostles awaited in silent prayer the coming of the Holy Ghost, and on the morning of Pentecost emerged from the

supper-room, the duly accredited representatives of Christ, with a world's eternal destiny in their hands and on their lips God's message to the nations. The Catholic Church was at last a living reality, a visible society, with Peter for head and centre of authority, with his fellow apostles for ambassadors, with the world of men and women for subjects. One faith, one Lord, one baptism! However true it may be that Christ could have safeguarded the interests of His Church without the appointment of a visible Head, we are saved the need of all conjecture by the fact set down in St. Matthew's gospel. It is now certain that He did appoint such a Head in the person of St. Peter, and the plan was in eminent harmony with the fitness of things. The Church is made up of men, not angels. It ought, therefore, to be a visible body, an organization readily recognised by the senses or instruments of knowledge at men's disposal. Authority is the essential requisite for every society, and in a visible society like the Church this authority ought to reside in a person easily approached and definitely known. Christ, therefore, made Peter Head of His Church, and decreed at the same time that Peter's legitimate successors should forever hold first place in His kingdom. Peter's successors are the Popes of Rome from Linus to Pius; and, from the dawn of Christianity down to our own day, the faithful have ever looked to the Popes for authoritative guidance and direction. "Rome has spoken, the question is settled," is an adage come down to us from St. Augustine, and learned by him from his ancestors in the faith. We Catholics, therefore, are not ships tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We have a Church armed with credentials from on high; and, though she presumes not to clear up every mystery, she leaves us in no doubt concerning what we are to believe. Her doctrine is clear and fixed, admitting of absolutely no doubt, or dispute, or compromise. Her title to our loyalty and submission is stamped with the approval of Heaven. Men may from prejudice, pride or selfishness refuse to enter her fold; they may object to the stiff rigidity of her teaching, and heap with blame her undying attitude of intolerance against error; but there she stands, the witness of the ages, just as the Lord Christ made her, her arms wide open to receive, without a single concession to the

clamors of passion, whatever son or daughter of God seeks peace and salvation.

The Church Christ founded was meant for all ages and all nations. It was to be the ark of salvation, equipped with abundant means for the sanctification of its members. And, last of all, it was to be apostolic in its origin, able to trace its descent down through the ages from the Church founded on Peter. It was to be in a word one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic. And in this year of our Lord 1926, the only body of the faithful that presumes with justice to lay claim to these four marks, is the body known the world over as the Roman Catholic Church. It is one in the fullest sense of the term; one in doctrine, one in government, one in ritual. Its unity is the wonder and admiration of the world, absolutely unassailable, and a clear index of the finger of God. It is holy in every particular. It had a holy founder in the person of Jesus Christ, it preaches a holy doctrine, it has in the seven sacraments a wealth of resources for the sanctification of its members, whatever their age, rank, or condition; and it possesses a roll of saints that scatter all the years of its history with the splendid glories of virginity, heroic sanctity, and martyrdom. It is so peculiarily Catholic or universal, that no other gathering of the faithful makes bold to assume the name. Through honor and through shame it has held on to the title, and they who endeavor to wrest it away are not taken seriously by men of common sense. The term Catholic is even more distinctive of us than the cross on our steeples, or the sign with which we mark ourselves as a prelude to prayer. In our Church the line of succession from the apostles is unbroken. Pius' right to the Chair of St. Peter is above suspicion, and vested with a degree of certainty that attaches to the inherited authority of no civil sovereign in Europe. We were the Church of the apostles 1500 years before Protestantism came into vogue, and our separated brethren, recognising this fact, prefer to leave the question of apostolic succession alone. No sect, whatever its name or polity, can with any show of justice lay claim to all four marks of Christ's true Church. I venture a step farther, and maintain that no sect can vindicate to itself the possession of any one of these four marks in its full and complete sense. No sect of any standing is

one in point of government, with a centre of authority enjoying the vast prerogative of our sovereign Pontiff. No sect is holy in point of founder. Luther, the parent of Protestantism in Germany, is not a name to conjure with in the realms of holiness. Henry VIII, from whom English Protestantism derives its origin, was a lustful assassin of deluded and defenseless women. The other branches of heresy were no more fortunate in their progenitors. It will not do for our opponents to say that they have Christ for founder, with men like Luther and Henry for agents. That would be to dishonor Christ. Besides, history bears record of no authentic commission bestowed by Christ on the several personages who introduced Protestantism to the world's attention. We are not yet descended to the folly of setting store by dreams and private messages, as unsubstantial as those which induced the first prophet of the Mormons and his followers to pack their wagons and move West. Some sects teach doctrines positively subversive of all morality. Luther himself sanctioned concubinage in the case of Philip, Landgrave of Hesse. History is witness to the small respect Henry had for marriage and the right to life. Zwinglius in his articles or creed openly teaches that money can condone crimes done in the unhallowed name of impurity.

Viewed in this light the explanation of Protestantism's rise and growth is easy. In its first beginnings it was recruited from the ranks of priests and nuns sadly fallen from their high estate of sanctity, tired of their vows, and greedy for the flesh-pots of Egypt. It promised freedom from restraint, did small violence to nature, pampered men's baser instincts, and strewed the way to Heaven with roses of its own making. Doctrine that professes to do away with the annoying strife, set down in the gospel as purchase-money for Heaven, will always have an army of adherents among men. Lazy rebels and lovers of ease will forever continue to form a large percentage of our race, and these by a kind of necessity of nature stand ready to take refuge under cover of a lie, however monstrous, illogical or degrading. Mahomet gathered and holds millions under his standard, because his system of worship canonizes sensuality, encourages ferocity, and makes Heaven the abode of unclean-

ness. The Catholic Church makes no such bid for the allegiance of the unholy. It stands for war against the passions, harassing self-denial, the purity of the angels. It lays a heavy cross on the shoulders of its sons and daughters, and bids them in the language of Christ groan beneath its weight every day of the year. It has no solace for the senses, preaches forgiveness of enemies, and advocates the supremacy of soul over body. Membership in the Catholic Church is constituted by a love of suffering, poverty and pain, and by a predilection for the galling yoke of God's law. And God's law meets corrupt nature at every turn to cross its inclinations, and grind its perverseness to the dust. It forbids impiety, revenge, dishonesty; it forbids, with hell for penalty, every indulgence of the senses perpetrated outside of marriage. This passion was meant by an all-wise Providence for the preservation of the race, and marriage alone makes its pleasures legitimate. Even in marriage bounds are set to the enjoyment of privileges. Marital rights must never be exercised without relation to, and dependence on, the propagation of offspring. When the responsibilities of marriage are once assumed, they are assumed for life. Divorce is not countenanced in the Catholic Church, and whatever disagreeable features occur to mar the happiness of wedded bliss must be borne with patience to the end. The labor and pain of bearing children, the care and expense attached to their rearing and education, must be accepted as religious duties consequent on marriage; and many of the hellish devices resorted to for escape from the burden of a family are nothing short of murder, and the most disgusting type of harlotry. These and a thousand such restrictions, imposed on the license of sin, must forever operate to frighten the wicked away from the door of God's true Church. His Church is the Church of the Saints, and only the pure-minded and good can find consolation and comfort within its walls.

Thank God for it, faith is not all dead yet; and, as long as time lasts, the Church our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ built shall last, and within her gates shall be gathered a multitude of worshippers, men, women and children courageous enough to accept all the responsibilities of belief, and magnanimous enough to trust God for the future. We have a

cause, and our cause is the greater glory of God, to spread His Kingdom, to scatter broadcast over the earth the fire He came to enkindle. We have a Leader, the Lord Christ. We muster ranks about Omnipotence, who can back His pledges strong with bonded promise of eternal truth. We have a flag, the thorn-crowned and bleeding emblem of the League; and to the eyes of faith the handle of our flag is wet with drops of blood, that once warmed the Heart of God Himself. We have a history, the proudest ever written. The annals of our faith are a glorious record, and we can borrow inspiration from its pages.

We belong to the Church of the Catacombs. We are kin with the martyrs of the Coliseum, and we deserve the obloquy of eternal contempt, if through any fault of ours blame or shame attaches to the fair fame of Catholicity. We are soldiers in the kingdom, and every Catholic has a point in the line to guard against the enemy's attack. This is an age of trusts, an age of associations for mutual profit and gain. We priests are wide awake to the fact, and we often catch ourselves engaged in thought on this question. Is God going to be the only person in the world, in whose honor and for whose sake men will refuse to combine? His enemies and the enemies of His Church strain every nerve, use every muscle, to present a solid front to the onward march of faith and Catholicity. Needless to say, their efforts are vain. Let them organize as they will, let them invent a thousand other signs, countersigns and grips. They can never hope to overthrow so sacred an institution as the Catholic Church, built on God's word for foundation. And why? Well, simply because God Almighty is on guard. Simply because God has promised duration without end to His one true Church, and sooner shall the heavens fall than God's word fail. Were our Church a merely human institution, built by men's hands, and kept together by merely human effort, it would have long since shared the fate of old Greece and old Rome, and would have disappeared from the face of the earth, bequeathing only a name to history. But our Church is a thing divine, Omnipotence takes a hand in its preservation; and no power on earth, no power in hell, can measure swords with Omnipotence and hope to win. And yet we ought to learn a

lesson from our enemies. We ought to get together and join hands in the cause of good, as they get together and join hands in the cause of iniquity and wrong. God in the present dispensation of Providence wants His sons to work along the ordinary lines of human prudence, and make their own whatever advantages reside in the art of combining and uniting forces. In union there is strength, and this saying is as true for the army of God's workers as it is for the soldiers engaged in fighting a nation's wars.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Romans 8; 12–17 *Gospel, St. Luke 16; 1–9*

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

—St. Luke 16, 8.

It is a painful acknowledgment to have to make, but the truth may as well be told. The streets and the workshops of our city are crowded with men, women and children, who do more real work for a few greasy dollars than we are willing to do for a crown and a throne in Heaven. These sons and daughters of toil, these devotees of Mammon, remain awake all night, they tie themselves down to some stifling and disagreeable employment all day, and are well content if at the end of the month they receive for wages a sum of money so contemptibly small that it would fail to excite the greed of a moderately well-to-do man of business. In the face of this fact many a negligent Catholic stays away from Mass on Sunday, either to enjoy a little longer sleep, or hie him to some place of amusement. And all the while he knows well, as well as you and I know, that he is endangering nothing less than his soul's eternal salvation. Why, the conduct of lukewarm Catholics almost forces one to the conclusion that there would be more saints, had Almighty God promised not Heaven, but a million dollars to every man, woman and child able to boast a clean conscience on the day of judgment. The census of the city about represents the number of our citizens in hot pursuit of wealth, and pleasure, and honor. Will anyone contend that the same census represents the number of our citizens in hot pursuit of virtue and Heaven? I fancy not. I am well aware that every street has a large percentage of fairly pious people, who give more or less attention to the concerns of their soul; but the reflection does not prevent me from thinking that the fingers of a very few

hands would be needed to count the saints of our city, the men and the women, who make personal holiness as much a business of their life as eating, and buying and selling. I am aware, too, that God's cause and the cause of religion fare no worse here than they fare elsewhere; but I am equally persuaded that God's cause and the cause of religion are both here and elsewhere treated with far less consideration than they deserve at the hands of Catholics.

We Catholics are essentially men of faith, men born not for time but for eternity, men who measure success and failure by no such standards as their worldly minded neighbors employ, men who are glad that death puts a period to human life, and ushers men's souls into immortality. And yet, were we the men of faith we ought to be, did we honestly believe that Heaven is all it is said to be, I wonder would we devote as little attention as we do to the concerns of our soul; I wonder would we race up and down in life as we do, in search of honor, and pleasure, and wealth, and postpone all serious thought of eternity till death is staring us in the face, till the tomb is distant only a day's journey? Don't you think that things would be reversed? Don't you think that instead of working six days of the week and praying one, we would feel inclined to work only one day of the week and pray six? Don't you think that, instead of spending whole weeks without a single serious thought of God, we would get down on our knees every morning, and with tears in our eyes ask God to stand at our side throughout the day with grace in His hand, and keep us from sin, and help us before night fell to get closer to Him and Heaven?

We are Catholics, and our belief exacts of us no ordinary degree of sanctity. We are part and parcel of God's chosen people, and our God is the God of holiness. We belong to the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ Himself, and we point with pride to the achievements of men and women, whom we love to call our brothers and sisters in the faith, with whom we can really and truly claim kinship by the clearest of titles. But, when we honestly sit down and examine our hearts, must we not to our shame acknowledge that our ambitions are surprisingly low? When we compare our slow progress in virtue with the exalted heights to which we must climb before the

day is done, must we not confess that a feeling of fatigue creeps over us? When we read the lives of our ancestors, of the feeble old men, of the delicate women, of the tender virgins, who met death in all its terrors rather than swerve from the path of right, must we not strike our breasts in sorrow, and declare before high Heaven that we are the degenerate sons of worthy and magnanimous heroes? These low ambitions of ours, this feeling of fatigue, this degeneracy, are facts, they are deplorable facts, they are stains on our escutcheon; and they must be annihilated, eradicated, and that too, speedily. Else we lose our prestige, and what is worse, we lose our birthright, the kingdom of Heaven.

All facts have their causes. Once discover and remove these causes, and the facts will not recur. The cause in this instance is not far to seek, nor hidden, nor deep. We are fools in the business of saving our souls, simply because we lack ordinary, every-day wisdom. We allow ourselves to be distanced by the children of this world in their race for trifles, we remain sinners while they grow rich, we sleep at the starting-post while they run a mad career past all sorts of obstacles, only because the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. We make the sad mistakes we make in the matter of virtue and sin, not because we have lost faith in the Scripture, nor yet because we set a higher value on money and honor, and pleasure, than we set on the good things God has in store for His sons. Our mistakes are the direct result of a strange forgetfulness, very difficult to explain in its origin. They are the result of a stolid indifference, that in other transactions would be called gross stupidity. They are the result of failure to profit by the accidents of every-day experience. They are the result of ignorance so inexcusable and so unaccountable, that it must be in great part due to the interest the devil takes in our downfall and destruction. The children of this world forget only what it is inconvenient to remember. They are indifferent to their own advantage, when sick or dead perhaps. They never bump their heads against the same beam twice. They can feign ignorance, they cannot be guilty of it, when there is question of things material. But we, the children of light, whenever we descend to the low meanness of commit-

ting sin, simply behave as if abandoned by memory and reason. Sin in a Catholic involves forgetfulness of ever so many things. Whenever we sin, we forget that God is looking straight at us. We forget that the God we offend died for us in torments on the cross. We close our eyes and turn our backs on the glory and the joys of Heaven. We allow the fires of hell to burn low and die in our thoughts. Then, the sluggish indifference we display in the chief business of our life, the easy-going, slip-shod, hap-hazard way we have of trying to become saints are phenomenal and unfathomable. Why, an ambitious boy or girl at school will spend hours at his or her books, and will let no thought of outside matters interfere with the morrow's lesson. If this boy and girl, if we grown-up children, only worked with half as much earnestness in the matter of piety, they and we would soon be ripe for Heaven. A person is ripe for Heaven, when he has once grown into the happy state of regularly avoiding sin, and habitually practising virtue. And it seems to me that everyone can with no great trouble, if he proceeds methodically, grow into this blessed condition. He need not retire from the ordinary occupations of life. He need not withdraw from home and friends, to hide himself in a monastery. He need but call to his assistance that wisdom and prudence, which the children of this world know so well how to use. God's grace, the foundation of all holiness, is freely and abundantly given to such as ask for it with fervor, and God's grace never fails even sinners. The trouble is that we play false to God's grace, the trouble is that we seldom or never heartily coöperate with God's grace. And God's grace, without man's coöperation, is in the designs of an all-just and all-wise Providence dead energy, practically wasted force. We are good by fits and starts. Today we entertain angels; tomorrow, demons. Today we are clean with the cleanliness of God's sons; tomorrow we trail our white garments in the mire of sin, and strut around in the rags of iniquity. Today we stand ready to die rather than do wrong; tomorrow we fall down and do wrong rather than suffer some little inconvenience, rather than deny ourselves some vain and momentary gratification. Intermittent efforts of this sort bear no lasting fruit. The merchant or mechanic, who would attempt to conduct business on

these lines, would soon have to beg, steal or starve. And certainly the art of becoming a saint demands almost as much diligence and exertion as the art of becoming a prosperous tradesman.

To become saints, therefore, we must introduce a radical change into our methods. We are not free to aspire to sanctity or not, as we please. Our Maker has imposed upon us a solemn obligation in this matter, and as soon as we tire of the work and give up, we are rebels, we are disobedient slaves, and we are exposing ourselves to the danger of losing Heaven altogether. All sanctity is composed of two elements, the avoidance of sin and the acquisition of habits of virtue. Since avoidance of sin almost infallibly secures the acquisition of habits of virtue, it may be well to confine our attention to this one element. It is a good thing to remember from the start that we do not all commit the same sins. Some never feel tempted to take the life of another. Some experience no difficulty whatever in avoiding drunkenness, cursing and swearing. But we can be sure of this, that every man, woman, and child born into the world have some one pet passion, that will drag them down to hell, unless they root it out of their hearts. Then, stand like good soldiers, awake and alert at your post. Consider that your Captain and Lord Jesus Christ has chosen you and commissioned you to mount guard at this point in the wall around the heavenly Jerusalem, and rise to a proud consciousness of your responsibility. Above all, keep watch and ward over your thoughts. Scorn to let the world and business swallow them all up. Let God have place in them at least now and then during the day. Where the mind has no thought of God, it is journeying towards hell. When a man entertains thoughts of God, God is somewhere in the near neighborhood; yea, God's hand is in the hand of that man, and the two journey along together; and at the end of the road are peace, and joy and light forever.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 Cor. 10; 6–14 *Gospel, St. Luke, 19; 41–47*

"Seeing the city He wept over it."
—St. Luke 19, 41.

The Gospel read in today's Mass records one of the most touching incidents in Our Lord's public life. For three long years He travelled the length and breadth of Judea exerting all His omnipotence, all His wisdom, all His tenderness to change the hearts of His chosen people the Jews, and make them ready for the reception of His Law. They who know say that the habitual gravity of His countenance and its stern majesty betrayed the sense of seriousness and sad disappointment with which He fulfilled His mission. He never laughed, the Gospels bear record of no occasion on which He smiled. A few, a very few times He is said to have wept; and, whenever Jesus Christ wept, we can feel sure there was abundant reason for tears, we can feel sure that Jesus Christ saw in the event that called forth His tears some peculiarly saddening traits, that escape our notice. One of the occasions on which He wept was the day of His entrance into Jerusalem, when Hosannas and the hymns of children rang through the streets, that were just one week later to be dyed with His life-blood.

In every city, through which he passed on His apostolic journeys, He left some memorial of His visit; a stupendous miracle, a sermon breathing heavenly wisdom, or a deed so transcendently prudent that only God could be its author. No city had been more favored in this respect than Jerusalem. But Jerusalem was the stronghold of His bitterest enemies, Jerusalm was possessed whole and entire by the Scribes and the Pharisees, the types of the men of sin, who today hold high places, and are doing continued battle against the cause of Christ. He certainly left nothing undone to change the hearts

of these proud and corrupt hypocrites, and today, as He rode into their city, He saw with the eyes of a prophet that all His labors in their behalf would prove vain, and that the throne, to which they would lead and on which they would seat their Messiah, the promised of ages, would be the gibbet of the Cross.

There is a something peculiarly sad about blasted hopes and blasted ambitions. Blasted hopes and blasted ambitions resemble the death of a promising child, and the human heart is acquainted with no sadder thing than the death of youth. This is what appealed to the human sympathies of Jesus Christ in the scene today's Gospel describes, and appealed to them so forcibly that tears filled His holy eyes and flowed down His holy cheeks. He had wished to make friends of the Scribes and Pharisees, He had all along hoped that His kindness would at last triumph over their hatred; but now near the close of His life He understood only too well that His wishes would not be respected, and that His hopes would not be fulfilled. Jesus Christ wishes to make us His friends. He has been following with eyes of love the career of each and every one here present from the cradle even to this moment, and He has all along hoped that some day or other His kindness would win the victory over our negligence and sinfulness, and induce us to settle down at last and serve him in good earnest. Are we going to respect His wishes? Are we going to see to it that His hopes in our regard are not empty and vain? Or are we, like the Scribes and Pharisees, going to continue in perverseness and cause new grief to the Saviour, who wishes us nothing but good, and confers on us nothing but favors? The answer to this question rests with ourselves. A person with generous instincts can give but one answer, that, live or die, he will not be guilty of the meanness displayed by the Scribes and Pharisees; that, live or die, he will not force Jesus to shed a single tear in addition to those He has already shed over the sins and ingratitude of His children.

We know the means adapted to making good this answer. Sin alone can make Jesus weep; and, if sin disappeared from the earth, why, our earth would straightway exchange places with Heaven. Sin will not soon disappear from the entire earth, but each day witnesses its gradual disappearance from the lives of men and women in earnest about their salvation, and

working hard to become saints. And Jesus will never be satisfied with us, unless we strive to make ourselves part and parcel of that goodly multitude, and go on generously from early morning till late at night fighting sin out of our hearts.

We Catholics have no excuse for living, unless every morning of the year we buckle on the armor of virtue to do stout battle with sin and drive it headlong from God's lovely universe. We are soldiers in the Kingdom, and here is our foe. Hell makes daily inroads on Christ's territory, and we must beat the enemy back. Christ owns men's souls by the double right of creation and redemption. He died in torments on Calvary to redeem them, and all hell is stirring to make void His purchase, and rob His Cross of victory. His dying cry, I thirst, was but a feeble expression of the burning wish Jesus Christ has for the salvation of men's souls. Our redemption was His life-work, His bosom knew no other longing, and its heat affected His Sacred Heart in much the same way as thirst affects the throat. He had come to scatter the fire of divine love on the earth, and He is breathing flame. As a final bid for the conversion of sinners, the growth of the just in holiness, the perseverance of the saints, He gives utterance to the zeal that is consuming the last feeble remnants of His life. And oh! had we stood on Calvary's top that first Good Friday, how we should have rushed like David's soldiers through the lines of a hostile army, to wet our King's lips with a cup of cold water! Could we stand idly by in such an emergency, we should consider ourselves worthy of eternal reprobation. And yet Christ has mercifully put this cup of cold water in our power, He furnishes us every day with opportunities to acquit ourselves of this heroism. When we labor intensely at our own salvation, when we work earnestly by word and example to win the world to God, we are pouring balm into the wounds of Christ, we are opening springs of coolness to quench His burning thirst. Let sinners, let the men and women outside of our Church enacting the part of Rome's rough soldiery, offer Him for drink the hyssop and vinegar of iniquity. We mean to be more generous. We mean to comfort His dying hours with our heart's best affections, with the sweetest wine in virtue's vintage, with prayer and progress along the way of the saints.

In the service of the Lord Christ we must be victims. We must hold ourselves to the hard task of sacrifice by unbroken hours of meditation on God in pain for the sins of men. Every communion we make must be offered in this spirit of atonement. It must be another cup of cold water touched to divine lips dying of thirst. It must be another kiss imprinted on the tear-stained cheeks of our Man of Sorrows. It must be another token of encouragement to the abandoned outcast of our race, with no one on earth to pity Him, no one in Heaven to console. Our minds must be full of the one thought, to make pleasant for love's prisoner in the tabernacle His stay among men. We must live, move and have our being in a perpetual dream of sacrifice and prayer, and expiation. We are no friends to Christ, we have no right to count ourselves His sons and daughters, unless we burn deep into our hearts this image of the Divine Victim, unless we shape our lives to one long round of sacrifice. We must multiply our communions, not so much for the sweetness and balm of comfort we carry away with us as for the joy we do the aching Heart of our Supremest lover. We must sink all selfishness, and as living victims lose thought of everything but the relief our piety affords the Sacred Heart, the Divine Victim on our altars. And we cannot better discharge this duty than by studying the sacrificial characteristics of Christ's life in the tabernacle and by frequent communion. Taste and see how sweet the Lord is! Taste with the mind of meditation, taste with the heart by actual contact with the God of sweetness, the God of delights. Calvary is now 1900 years old; and though, as long as morning Mass is offered on our altars, memory of Calvary can never be lost, we are nevertheless living in another age, and that awful scene of blood and agony is shrouded under the mystic separation of substances hiding under familiar forms and appearances.

Our Divine Victim is daily put to death on our altars, His sacrifice is daily making amends for sin, and flooding the world of men's hearts with grace. Jesus in our tabernacles continues still a victim in these softer times of peace. The sword that now rends and tears His life is many-edged. Think of the long hours of the day, the longer hours of the night He spends in His gilded prison, with no one and nothing for company

but the rising and falling light of the sanctuary lamp. Solitude is an unwelcome guest, and our Divine Victim is as sensitive to the sharp pain of abandonment as the tenderest of men. And yet to make amends for the sins that can be laid at the door of company, to be victim for the crimes of small and large degree done in society, Jesus submits to the humiliation of empty churches, He courts the loneliness of night. With a single word of command He could have the nations at His feet, He could have the world ranged round His altars for unending functions of praise and thanksgiving. In this capacity He would be Lord, and Master, and Sovereign King; and His prerogative of victim would escape notice. But the Son of Man for our instruction and example entertained from the start an abiding hatred of honor, to embrace opportunities for the quiet and obscurity of oblivion. He was written a victim at the head of the book, and He means to live true to this inviting character till the end, till the heavens are crumpled as paper in the hand, and the Lord of glory comes on a cloud to judge the living and the dead. And so throughout the ages He rests in His tomb silent and content, a reproach to the slaves of sin, a centre of blessings to the devout and holy. The noise of traffic is borne in upon Him from the street, the shuffling feet of cold friends and rancorous enemies move fast or slow beyond the church's door, and the night air without is buffeted by unseeming hilarity, ribald song or whispered wickedness. And through it all the Lord Jesus is absorbed in prayer for immortal souls. The world is at war with His goodness, and He is averting from the world His Father's threatening wrath. Men of sin are pulling down His Kingdom, and He is compounding medicine for the wounds their folly makes. He is devising means yet to procure the world's salvation. He is despatching angels hither and thither, those airy messengers of light, with a word of warning for this rebellious heart, with a word of encouragement for this heart bowed down with grief in the Master's service. He is planning campaigns up and down the universe, to subjugate mankind, and bring it under the standard of His Sacred Heart. He is reaching out for wider and wider dominion over men's souls. He is killing the monotony of solitude, the tedium of

loneliness, by renewed activity in the accomplishment of His Father's business. He is gathering, in the quiet of His desert, forces able to shake creation to its base and renew men's minds with wisdom. He is creation's King; and, though the generosity of the faithful hangs His altar-throne with laces, silks and rare gems, He is often by day and night a king in a gilded prison, a king with no courtier save invisible angels and wondering souls of the elect. He is often by day and night a king holding court in an empty palace, waiting with patience for the homage of subjects, who waste their lives outside in the empty games of children, the vain pursuit of wealth, pleasure and honor.

We can help Jesus to forget His sorrows by consecration to His service in the Holy Eucharist. And this consecration must be manifest in repeated visits to the Blessed Sacrament, in daily attendance at Mass, and in the growth of frequent communion. A visit to the Blessed Sacrament is a mine of wealth. It hides within its simplicity such a world of treasure that difficulty attends its discovery. A visit to the Blessed Sacrament delights the heart of God beyond measure, it is of exceeding great good to the neighbor, and it procures to the devout soul enamoured of the practice advantages that cannot be acquired by any other act of piety. It is, first of all, a magnificent display of faith; it is belief translated into action, and the cause of God is in sore need of such defense in these times of ours. Irreligion is everywhere rampant throughout the world. Faith is dead or dying in the multitude; and morality among certain classes has lost every species of sanction save that lent it by the police and the laws of outward decency. The worshippers, who enter our churches day and night for an hour of quiet communion with God, are registering their solemn protest against too prevalent unbelief, and giving untold glory to God. For them God is no empty name. He is a living reality, a friend and father, burdened with concern for the welfare of His sons and children. A visit to the Blessed Sacrament is a silent hymn of praise lifted to the skies, and it atones for the studied silence maintained in the world regarding God. His holy name is mentioned oftenest on the streets and in our workshops only to be dishonored and pro-

faned. It is by law barred entrance to our schools, and advocacy of His holy religion in the company of young pupils is a violation of the Constitution. But in reparation for these multiplied insults, the hearts of the fervent, engaged in prayer before the tabernacle, are pouring out volumes of praise to their Creator's glory. And oh, the tenderness wrapped up in a single hour spent before the Blessed Sacrament! It softens the just anger of God against what open and avowed enemies threaten His Kingdom with destruction. Their furious hatred of God constitutes them nothing short of demons. They are employing all the agencies of evil to dethrone God and push Him from His universe. Literature, education, society, everything is poisoned with their fell venom; and our God of glory, pitying their folly, derives new pain from their mad endeavors.

With us Catholics the Mass is everything. It is the one act of devotion, on which our Mother the Church insists. All her children must under pain of mortal sin hear Mass on Sundays and holydays. She knows the infinite value of this august sacrifice; and, to secure its advantages to her children, she makes frequent presence at it a solemn obligation. This matter of Sunday Mass is an easy commandment. It is attended with so little difficulty that it looks like waste of time and energy to insist at great length on its fulfilment. And yet easy, trivial as it may seem, fidelity to this one commandment is a thing of good omen. It argues at least the presence of strong faith and a spirit of prayer; and, as long as faith and prayer remain alive in a man's heart, he has a fighting chance for salvation. But gross neglect of this precept is a token of final and impending ruin. It betrays a weakening all along the lines of the spiritual life. It smells of Protestantism. It is the entering wedge for loss of faith. It is the stone the devil ties around the neck of his victim before he drowns him in unbelief and hell. Oh, our fathers in the faith appreciated Holy Mass at its true worth. In old Rome they gathered in sandpits and under the ground, to follow some aged priest through the sacred mysteries on the eve of their martyrdom. In Ireland during the dark times of persecution they risked their lives and lost them rather than miss an opportunity to hear Mass. And we Catholics had men of this stamp for fathers, women of

this stamp for mothers. How low some of us are fallen! And even today the good old men and the good old women who brave the weather every morning of the year to hear Mass are standing reproaches to the lazy renegades who remain in bed, to the covetous misers who give Sunday to the devil rather than comply with this holy commandment of God's Holy Church.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 Cor. 12; 2–11 *Gospel, St. Luke 18; 9–14*

"Two men went up into the temple to pray."
—St. Luke 18; 10.

The parables employed by our Lord Jesus Christ to impress His words upon the slow minds of His hearers are as vivid and true to life today as they were 1900 years ago. The Pharisee and the publican are types; and, while we can count among our own personal acquaintance many charming examples of humility deep as the publican's, we cannot but be painfully aware of the fact that the Pharisees are not all dead yet. These two men went up to the temple to pray. One returned home, a better and a wiser man; the other went home, a worse man morally, a more stupid man intellectually. This Pharisee was so full of himself and his own conceit that in the very act of prayer he lost sight of the end and essence of prayer. To pray means to ask, and the prayer of the Pharisee contained from beginning to end not a single request. To pray means to raise the heart and the mind to God. Our friend the Pharisee was incapable of raising his heart and his mind beyond the low level of his own pretended holiness. He was so wedded to himself, so absorbed in his own seeming excellence, that even in this hour of prayer God filled only a secondary place in his thoughts. Prayer means to praise God, thank Him for favors already received and implore from Him expected favors. The Pharisee praised himself; he thanked God, but in the very next breath hinted that his sanctity was his own work and the result not of grace, but of his own individual energy. The whole outward bearing of the man, his pompous behavior, the attitude he must have struck betokened a pride disgusting in the extreme and highly provocative of God's anger.

But look at the publican, and hear his prayer. He did not proudly march to the very steps of the altar and there raise his voice in unworthy self-praise. He stood afar off, somewhere near the entrance to the temple, so thoroughly penetrated with a sense of his own unworthiness that he lifted not his eyes from the ground. He felt so ashamed, and was so smitten with sorrow for whatever faults he had admitted during a long lifetime, that he shrank from a glance at the heavens, as he would shrink from the gaze of God in anger. He had a full appreciation of the infinite distance between himself and Heaven. He was capable of giving due credit to God for the part God's grace played in his sanctification. As he stood there in the corner, with his head bared and his shoulders bowed to the ground, he lost sight of everything in the universe but himself and God; himself, a man of sin; and God, the fountain-head of sanctity. His neighbors entered not into his thoughts at all; and hence he said, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"; not like the Pharisee, "O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men!" In this matter of saving our souls or becoming saints we can accomplish a vast deal by attending strictly to our own business, and leaving others to manage their own little affairs with God. If sometimes we are thoroughly possessed with the desire to look about us and consider others, we must be careful to select for consideration souls in high favor with God. By behaving in this way we shall rid ourselves of the danger that overtook the Pharisee; and, instead of proudly reckoning ourselves better than our neighbors, we shall humble ourselves with the publican. The Pharisee did not go down to his house justified. He made no request of God, and received from God no favor. The publican went down to his house justified. He prayed God's mercy, he rated himself a sinner; and God, who never neglects the prayer of the humble, had mercy, and sent the publican home a saint. Humility, then, and prayer are the virtues insisted on in the parable. There is no fruitful prayer without humility, without prayer humility of the sort God loves is impossible. Prayer is the eternal occupation of the angels and saints in Heaven, prayer is the continued employment of God's chosen servants on earth. The man, who habitually neglects his prayers, is

practically leading the life of an atheist, the life of a fool who says in his heart, there is no God. The man, who allows the devil of pride to take possession of his soul, is journeying towards death and eternal ruin.

Prayer is the lifting up of our minds and hearts to God, to praise Him, to thank Him, and beg of Him all the graces we need, whether for soul or body. This is our catechism's description of prayer, and every word is well chosen. I like that word lifting, because it is expressive of the work or effort it costs most of us to pray well. Some chosen souls find their delight in prayer. They easily contrive to escape from the noise, and the worry, and the temptations of the world about, and enjoy at their ease uninterrupted converse with God. But nearly all such persons live behind convent walls and in monasteries. Most of us fly nearer the ground. For most of us an hour well spent in prayer is an hour of hard work, for which we can with right expect wages at God's hand. And yet it should not be so. Prayer ought to be the one agreeable employment of our minds and hearts. God made us in kindness. He fitted us with minds to know the truth, with hearts to love the beautiful and good. And our minds should never tire of thinking about Him, who is infinite truth; our hearts should never grow weary loving Him, who is infinitely beautiful, infinitely good. But we are essentially men of business, and we are in a whirl of excitement all day long. Fathers have to provide for their families. Mothers have to work from early morning till late at night, keeping the home in order. Young men and young women have to lend their fathers and mothers a helping hand. And the children,—God bless them,—they are all intent on play and mischief, they are strengthening their little bodies for the years of labor ahead. And where does God come in? Well, if God fails of a place in our early morning thoughts, in our thoughts at bedtime, he is surely going to be crowded out altogether, and will get no place at all. And we are worse than heathens, if we live a single whole day without once stopping to think of God, to pray to Him, to praise Him, to thank Him for old favors, to beg Him for new ones. This duty of prayer is one of our most solemn obligations; and we are no friends to God, we have no right

to expect His blessing here or hereafter, if we habitually neglect prayer. A few minutes in the morning, a few minutes at night, are all God asks of us. He could in justice demand of us a larger portion of the day. Every one of its twenty-four hours is a gift He makes us, and for return He is abundantly satisfied with the short time it takes to say an Our Father and a Hail Mary in the morning and another at night. Surely, He is satisfied with little. And yet men, women and children are mean enough to offer as excuse for neglected prayers the plea that they have no time. What, would you dare insult God, the very God who can condemn you to hell forever, by telling him that you cannot spare Him five minutes, that you think too little of Him to go down on your knees when tired! You manage to find time for everything else, God is the only friend you thus neglect. You have hours to waste on the devil, you cannot find five minutes for God. For the sake of a few dollars you bend over a machine all day, stopping only to take your meals; and for the Heaven that God promises His faithful servants you cannot kneel down to say a few short prayers.

This matter of morning and evening prayers is of more importance than many people think. Prayer is a profession of faith. It keeps us in touch with God. It is a continual reminder that we are born for a better and a higher life than this; that all is not over when we die; that there is a judge, before whom after death we must appear to give a strict account of ourselves. It advertises the world of the fact that God's cause is not dead yet. Morning and evening prayers are the practical way we have of keeping the first of the Ten Commandments. That Commandment is as dear to the heart of God as any other. It is even dearer, because it contains our first duty to God Himself, that of adoration, praise and worship. And God is jealous of His honor. Morning and evening prayers are a way we have of thanking God for His favors. And God likes to be thanked for the trouble He takes in our regard. We owe Him our life, our health, our happiness, everything that we have; and, if He removed His hand from under us, we should in that moment die. He hates ingratitude, He has no love for the men and women, who, forgetting even

their good manners, enjoy His bounty without once thanking Him in prayer. It is a highly dangerous thing to incur God's displeasure. We are so dependent on God that we cannot afford to trifle with Him or make Him angry. To lose His favor, is to lose everything. Life is not worth living, when we once get off the list of God's friends. The man for whom God has no smile is a thing accursed. God's enemies, of course, eat, drink, sleep, laugh, joke, converse like other men; but their seeming happiness is empty, it is made of the same stuff as dreams, that mock the fancy of a fever-patient in delirium.

Oh God, how horrible to think that Catholics, who ought to know better, hurry off to work in the morning without kneeling to ask God's blessing! How painful to think that Catholics, who ought to know better, actually go to sleep at night without asking God and the angels to keep them from harm! Such Catholics depart from their homes arm in arm with the devil, and they work for him that day. His blessing, his curse follows them and, though they make money, though they succeed in business, God is not with them, and the day's work is a tremendous failure. And, then, at night they lie down with sleep, death's half-brother. What if they die during the night? What if they go out to meet God with their prayers unsaid, with this reproach of ingratitude and forgetfulness on their conscience? We must say our prayers, my friends, we must say our prayers! Prayer is money in God's kingdom. It has a purchasing power there. It can buy for us God's grace, and we are absolutely in need of this grace. Without the grace of God salvation is simply impossible. Without the grace of God escape from hell is simply out of the question.

So, hereafter we are going to say our prayers. That point is settled. What prayers shall we say? Well, a good Catholic ought at least to begin the day with that Morning Offering of the League, "O my God, I offer Thee my prayers, works and sufferings this day, in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus." He ought to say night and morning an Our Father, a Hail Mary, a Creed, Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and Contrition: 'My God, I believe all that Thou has revealed, all that the Holy Catholic Church teaches." "My God, I hope in Thee, and through the merits of my Lord Jesus Christ ex-

pect blessings here and life everlasting hereafter." "My God, I love Thee above all things, because Thou art infinitely good." "My God, I am sorry for my sins, because they offend Thee; and I am determined with Thy grace to commit sin no more, and avoid all occasions of sin." A good Catholic ought likewise to examine his conscience every night, and see wherein he has offended God during the day. If anyone's devotion prompts him to say more prayers, so much the better. We must pray, as far as possible, with attention, devotion, humility, confidence and perseverance. In prayer we are engaged in business with Almighty God, and no outside thought should interfere. We must fix our minds on His presence, and allow nothing else to occupy them. It is not altogether necessary to think particularly of every word we utter and of its meaning. It is enough to think of God during the Our Father, of the Blessed Virgin during the Hail Mary, and so of other prayers. We pray with perseverance when we never give up, no matter how deaf God may seem to be to our prayers. We pray with confidence, when we pray with an abiding hope, a certainty that God hears us. Our hope is well founded. God is all powerful, and can do us the favor we ask. God keeps His word, and He has promised in Holy Scripture, solemnly promised to answer every prayer we make Him. God is able and willing to hear our prayers; and that is enough. Here a difficulty presents itself. It is as old as Christianity, and has been a thousand times answered. God seems sometimes to neglect our prayers. Mothers sometimes pray for the recovery of a sick child, and the child dies. The poor sometimes pray for wealth, and they become poorer. Where, then, is God's promise? God's promise is all right. He is sometimes deaf to our prayers, only because He knows more than we do, and because He is perfectly aware that what we so much desire would do us harm. He, therefore, gives us something different from what we ask, but infinitely more useful. We can feel sure that God always hears our prayers. I would as soon believe that there is no God at all as think that He can be false to the promise He made when He said, "Ask, and you shall receive." To be certain that God always hears our prayers, it is not necessary to receive always what we pray for. I thank God

that I do not always receive what I pray for. God is surely wiser than we are, and the good thing He chooses for us is a better choice than any we could make. Some men pray to become millionaires, and they do not know that, if they once became millionaires, they would first lose the faith and then lose their souls forever. I feel, however, certain of this, that, if a poor man could equally well in God's knowledge save his soul with a million dollars to his credit, and prayed to God for the million, God would give it to him. I feel, equally certain that, if another poor man could not save his soul on account of the money he owned before praying, and prayed for a million, God would deprive him in some way or other of the small sum of money he already possessed. Every prayer we make rises as surely to the clouds as the dew drunk by the sun of early morning, and as surely descends at nightfall, when the lamp of life burns low, freighted with the benedictions of Heaven. We may not obtain precisely what we ask for, but we have God's word for it that no prayer of ours goes unheeded, and that we never part our lips in supplication without receiving an abundant answer.

Another difficulty come down from the pagans, and repeatedly urged by their modern imitators, turns on God's foreknowledge of events. Prayer, these penny philosophers say, cannot change what God has already ordained, and God has from eternity mapped out the course of every individual man. His infinite wisdom calls for a full and sure knowledge of every incident destined to have place in the life of the child yet unborn. The world a hundred years from now is going assuredly to wear a different aspect from what it wears today. But, whatever changes are in store for it, God knows them all, and knew them from the beginning. He has determined them all, and no conceivable agency can interfere with God's decrees or make them void. Up to this point of the controversy our adversaries and we are a unit. This is essentially the position we take with regard to God's knowledge and the affairs of men. But, when the enemy concludes from the certainty of God's knowledge and the fixity of God's providence that prayer is unavailing, we part company. Any such assertion can have for basis only ignorance or insincerity. God's foreknowledge

of our future acts never robs us of liberty. Though He knows to a certainty what we are going to do tomorrow or next week, when tomorrow or next week comes, we are entirely free in our movements. When God foresees and foreknows the future of a free agent like man, He does so with dependence on the free agent's will. He knows, of course, before the act is put, just how the free agent is going to conduct himself, without, however, putting obstacles in the way of that agent's freedom of choice. And He manages the universe accordingly. Thus, He knows beforehand that on a certain day in 1950, at a certain hour, a certain man is to find himself in straits, in sickness perhaps, or financial difficulties, or temptation. He knows moreover that with prayer this man can escape the threatening danger. The man is going to be free to pray or not, according to his own good pleasure. As a matter of fact God knows beforehand what the man's good pleasure will be. It will necessarily be either prayer or refusal to pray. If he chooses to pray, recovery follows, or business prosperity, or avoidance of sin. If he refuses to pray, death ensues, or ruin, or crime. When, therefore, that certain day and that certain hour in 1950 come, events fall out exactly as the man in question determines, and Providence is ready for whatever line of conduct he adopts. God stands ready to reward his prayer with a cure, or punish his neglect of prayer with death. Prayer, then, is of much avail. Prayer never changes God's eternal decrees, but God's eternal decrees are never formulated and fixed without an eye to men's prayers. We must, therefore, in the words of the Lord Christ, pray and never tire. And we must pray not so much for temporal blessings as for life everlasting. These temporal blessings are, after all, a dubious sort of gift. And in this connection we must often recall the beautiful and instructive words of St. John's gospel, "Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 Cor. 15; 1–10 *Gospel, St. Mark 7; 31–37*

"He hath done all things well."
—St. Mark 7, 37

In these few words the men of Galilee sum up the praises of the Lord Christ. This splendid eulogy can be applied with truth to nobody but God and His Blessed Mother. This epitaph sculptured on any other tomb would be a hollow lie; a piece of flattery, that even death could hardly excuse. Conduct absolutely without blemish demands a measure of self-restraint so exceptional, that only a small percentage of God's servants achieve it. Such conduct means that a man's relations with His Maker are all right, that his relations with his neighbor are all right, and that he stands well with himself. When emergencies arise, in which God asserts Himself Creator, and a man's interests clamor for recognition at the expense of God's prerogative, such conduct means that God wins the day over selfishness, and that man chokes his inclinations till life is gone from them. Such conduct means a common-sense view of things, when that view hurts self to the quick. Submission to God's law in any and every event, is the only attitude approved of by reason; and good conduct implies steadfast perseverance in this attitude. Every little departure from this straight line constitutes a sin; and sin is incompatible with good conduct. Sin means that a man's relations with his Maker are all wrong. It means rebellion, ingratitude and the most thorough sort of confusion. Good conduct is the stamp of true manhood, and a characteristic of the gentleman. A gentleman is he who knowingly and wittingly gives offense to nobody. God, of course, comes into the catalogue of beings, against whom it is possible to offend; and a man falls away from the standard

of gentlemanliness, when he wrongs God. The world is come to reckon him a gentleman, who preserves appearances; who, when abroad or in company, is guarded in his expressions and eminently careful to do nothing out of harmony with the canons of etiquette. The world never busies itself with a man's secret thoughts. It has no praise or blame for what he does, says, or thinks in corners remote from the light of day. But the Catholic gentleman knows that his duties in this matter of good conduct are of a wider range. He knows that, when all the world sleeps, His Maker's eye is awake and watching every movement of his hand and his heart. He knows that mere detection does not constitute wrong, and that scoundrels are today walking the streets in the garb of gentlemen. He knows that God alone is above deception in this matter; and, persuaded of the world's inability to judge aright, he strives to win the approbation of God and conscience; and borrows no worry from what the world thinks.

"He hath done all things well; He hath made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." In these words the people assign a reason for the statement that the Lord Christ had done all things well. They prove things by an appeal to the miracle just performed, the cure of the deaf and dumb man. We are not ourselves omnipotent; miracles are not at our command; but in the moral order we can imitate even this stupendous prodigy. We can make the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. By leading lives in perfect accord with our profession as Catholics, we can open the ears of neighbors hitherto deaf to divine truth, we can loosen tongues hitherto dumb in divine praise. We can make the beauty of Catholic truth known in homes the priest can never hope to enter. Every single one of my hearers can reach with his influence the heart of some neighbor wandering in the darkness of error and unbelief. And in the name of a common humanity, in the name of Christ's last prayer that His children may yet be one fold under one shepherd, I appeal to you to do the work well. Let virtue be so prominently stamped in your every word and deed, that even enemies may by force of your good example come to love the truth.

"He hath done all things well." "Bene omnia fecit." A fit

epitaph for God; and we can aspire no higher. But we can aspire as high, and it must be our ambition so to order our lives that, even if history forgets us, God's recording angel may write us in the book of doom, "He hath done all things well." The world is content to bestow on its heroes some such empty praise as, "First in war; first in peace; first in the hearts of his countrymen." But our standards are other than the world's. Some of the most consummate scoundrels history knows have enjoyed superiority in war, superiority in peace, and the flattery of their countrymen, the plaudits of an entire people. Saints, like their Captain and Leader Christ, have oftener than not been last in war, last in peace and last in the hearts of their countrymen; but in the eyes of God they have done all things well, and this single glory is the climax of their praise. Saints move to and fro among us without attracting notice. They are conspicuous for only the silent regularity of their lives. Only after their departure neighbors begin to reflect that their holiness was of a heroic order; and sometimes God has to work miracles to compel attention to their sublime virtues. We Catholics aim higher than our fellows. We Catholics have high ideals, and God be praised for the circumstance. Christ is our model, and we cannot sit down for a rest, till satisfied that our lives in some faint way resemble His.

We Catholics have high ideals. The man ambitious to become a hero may sadly fail in his plans, but he can hardly fall to the low and mean level of a coward. High ideals are poison to mediocrity. They are a tonic for activity, a remedy for laziness; and they are infallibly sure to bring out every particle of good hidden away in a man's being. To aim higher than we can possibly expect to shoot, is a maxim, with God's own wisdom for authority. Christ Himself tells us to be "perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect." Humility is born of high ideals, coupled with the consciousness of our own inferiority, as compared with their grandeur. The proud have low ideals, gleaned from the newspaper and modern novel. To these they have attained, beyond them they cannot aspire, with them they are thoroughly satisfied, and mediocrity or worse curses their entire lives. Honor with us is not the noise made by a demagogue. Man's worth and merit are not meas-

ured by the standard accepted among thieves and felons. A seat on a throne, just vacated by an idiotic minion of Satan, is no infallible sign of intrinsic dignity. We would not exchange a rag of the tattered garment that clung to the emaciated form of the beggar Lazarus, as he lay at the door of the rich man's house, for all the crowns ever melted down, for all the royal robes that moths have ever eaten. In our catechism intimacy with virtue is the only honor worth striving for, immunity from contact with sin is the summit of our aspirations. We Catholics, therefore, have high ideals. Our models are Jesus and His Mother Mary; and, to do all things well, we must conceive and cherish a burning resolve to make their virtues our own.

With us Catholics Jesus is in the expressive language of Scripture, "the way, the truth and the life." He is the teacher, the model and the maker of holiness. He is God, come down from Heaven to redeem mankind and open the gates to the Kingdom. He died on Calvary to ransom men from the slavery of the devil; but that was only one section of the large work mapped out for Him. Even with Heaven wide open to welcome them, men are deplorably weak, and need a triple help to lift them to the skies. They are ignorant of right and wrong, of real good and real evil; and, to journey through life without blame, they must have a teacher, whose heavenly and unerring wisdom can serve for sure and safe guide.

Jesus, the truth, is this teacher; and in the gospel He furnishes us with documents and directions, couched in the clear and simple language of God, and bearing on every one of the virtues peculiar to every age, state and condition in life. Obedience, poverty, purity, humility, self-denial, patience, charity, all the virtues are beautifully described by Him, and recommended in a most winning and attractive way. But even this was not enough. Heaven is won only at the expense of hard work and violent effort. And our selfishness, which is as close to us as life, makes us all little and big cowards, when face to face with hard work and violent effort. We have tried so often and failed, that we sometimes feel like thinking the whole thing impossible and giving up in despair. It is hard, extremely hard to go on fighting in the face of repeated defeat.

In time of war a general, when worsted by the enemy, can surrender, and so save himself from final loss. But in this fight for the Kingdom of Heaven, surrender is out of the question. To surrender to temptation, is to die; and the devil gives no quarter. Jesus knew all this. It was not enough to open Heaven wide and invite men to enter. It was not enough to tell men just what road they would have to walk to reach Heaven. He had to, besides, encourage men to march ahead in spite of failure, and hurts, and sorrows. He had to get out on the road Himself and walk in front, to show us cowards that humility is possible, that purity is possible, that obedience, patience, and all the virtues are possible. In one word, besides being our teacher, or the truth, Jesus had to become our model, or the way. And nothing so encourages one to persevere in the midst of difficulties as the example of a brave leader. Jesus was the right kind of teacher or preacher. He never taught a single thing without first practising what He taught. He wants us to do only what He did Himself. He is in front, we need only follow. Nay more, from fear that, in spite of encouragement, we should still prove too weak and sink down on the march, He purchased for us by His death on the cross a measure of grace abundantly able to carry us through every danger, past every temptation, up to the throne of God. Jesus, therefore, is the way, the truth and the life. To eventually reach Heaven, we have but to use the grace He puts at our disposal, learn the lessons of virtue He taught, and imitate the example of His holy life. To instruct and encourage us, He was born a helpless infant; He passed through the successive stages of childhood, boyhood, youth; studied at His mother's knee; played with companions; learned from Joseph the trade of carpenter; and in manhood's prime bade farewell to the happiest home on earth and the mother of His love, to walk three years to death and plant the standard of God's supremacy at the summit of the universe.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 2 Corinthians 3; 4–9 *Gospel, St. Luke 10; 23–37*

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
—St. Luke 10, 27.

Love of the neighbor for God's sake is charity in its completeness. In spite of the fact that temptation seldom leaves us long without abundant opportunities to manifest our love for God, it still remains true that God's sweet face is a world's journey distant from us, and we are by force of nature and habit inclined to forget friends separated from us a comparatively short length of time. "Out of sight, out of mind," is an old adage, and as true as it is old. New friends usurp in our affections places that we once thought sacredly sealed against all comers. On just this account, perhaps, God has surrounded us on all sides with beings like ourselves, beings made to His own image and likeness; and commanded us by a second law to love them as we love ourselves. The whole world is my neighbor, the world redeemed and loved even unto death by Jesus. And, if I pretend to love Jesus at all, I must love His friends, I must love the family He set here on earth to make itself ready for a final summons to eternal happiness in Heaven. And mankind is that family. The companionship of my neighbor may be more of a hell to me than solitude, his talk may be a constant incentive to fury, his temperament may be something horrid beyond the telling; and yet it is my bounden duty, a duty imposed on me by an all-wise God, to love him. My heart is moulded to love only what is beautiful, true and good. From a very necessity of nature, I feel free to love only what is lovable. How then can I love some of the persons, whom God's sweet will has made my neighbors? How can they find it in their hearts to love me with all my manifold meannesses? Ah! Well, the question can best be answered by asking another. How can

God love the sinner? How can God love the wretch, who lies awake at night, planning methods to destroy His kingdom in the hearts of men, and drag God from His throne in the universe? How can God love the sinner? Why, easily! He closes His eyes to the unlovely traits in the sinner's character, and concentrates His attention on the simple circumstance, that this sinner is the child of His tears, the exact reproduction of His own image, the captive ransomed by His Son's blood, a possible inhabitant of Heaven. God hates sin with an eternal hate, but He loves the sinner. Even so, in imitation of God, our Father, we must see beyond the disagreeable features in our neighbor's character and disposition. We must find in him and love the image of God. That image may be blurred and covered over with a thick coating of ugliness and sin. But it is there, and no amount of iniquity can quite blot it out or conceal it. This is what we call loving God in the neighbor, and this process is at the same time a deed of charity and a silent profession of faith. It would be silly waste of time to endeavor to cultivate a fondness for his companionship as such, for his talk as such, for his temperament as such. One might as well try to cultivate a taste for poison. The nature of love is opposed to any such attempt. We can be patient with his defects and shortcomings; we can by constant practice in the school of self-denial come to take no notice whatever of them; but we cannot love them, and no law of God obliges us to do so.

Love of the neighbor has very broad limits in which to exercise itself. God wants us to love him as we love ourselves. Self-love, then, or selfishness is the standard of measurement in this matter. And, as every child of Adam is afflicted with this disease of selfishness, he knows without mistake to what lengths he must go to satisfy God's wishes. We all love ourselves, and we love ourselves intensely. We are born that way, and there is no help for it. When held under water, we struggle violently for air. When in danger of falling, we grasp frantically at anything within reach. When threatened with a blow, our hands instinctively assume a position of defense. Self-love is really a thing of instinct with us, and it abandons us in no emergency. We have an excuse ready for our most inexcusable doings. We have a word of cheer for ourselves,

when the whole world would like to chase us to the desert with a frown. In our thoughts we dress our crimes in the garb of virtue, and wonder why others fail to see in us the pretty things we see in ourselves. We lavish patience on ourselves in every disappointing thing we do. We are kind to ourselves, no matter how much some of our follies move us to anger. Let us, then, applying the same rule to our neighbor's conduct, excuse where excuse is without a shadow of foundation. Let us cheer a brother already fallen, and, after helping him to rise, give him a push in the right direction. Let us clothe his faults with the mantle of charity, and let us enter into a solemn compact with ourselves to be patient with him when most provoked, to be kind to him when most unkindly dealt with and most unjustly treated. "Charity is patient, charity is kind!" 1 Cor. 13, 4.

Christian mercy is that phase of love for the neighbor, which prompts us to run to his assistance in an hour of need. It is the phase exemplified in today's story of the good Samaritan. And this Christian mercy is a wide virtue. In this world of social inequality, where poverty and pain meet us at every turn, mercy offers so many varied opportunities for practice that escape seems impossible. It deserved so frequent attention at the hands of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that nearly every page of the Gospel bears record of a word in His discourses, a deed in His journeys, commending mercy to His followers as a badge of their loyalty and a title to their crown. Mercy itself, like all the virtues, consists not so much in the outward act as in the inward disposition of heart, appreciating the needs of the neighbor, commiserating the same, and prompting the bestowal of relief. Of course, this disposition cannot long remain concealed. It must betray itself in outward acts; and we are by slow degrees come to judge of the virtue's presence by the visible effects it occasions. But kindness without attendant sympathy is counterfeit; and, like everything counterfeit, purchases nothing but loss. Some give an alms to be rid of the beggar; others, to be seen of men; others again, to provoke future favors. Such kindnesses are not mercy, but manifestations of impatience, or pride, or selfishness. Christian mercy has Christ and the interests of Christ's kingdom for last motive. Chris-

tian mercy is no mere natural movement of the heart. It is supernatural, and whole seas different from much of the charity that obtains today in the world.

This is an age of philanthropy. Homes are being everywhere reared for the homeless, and means are being distributed with a lavish hand to the destitute. But much of today's philanthropy is without the genuine ring of God's approval, that rested like a blessing on works of charity done in good old Catholic times. Monks and nuns fed the bodies of God's poor at the gates of their monasteries, and at the same time ministered to their famished souls the bread of faith, which nourishes unto eternal life. The enemy of souls is the moving spirit in many a beneficent scheme set on foot today; and his tools are the simple souls, who foolishly imagine that a warm bed in winter, a cool breeze in summer, and a satisfied appetite all the year round, are the centre and summit of human happiness and contentment. The devil has power to assume a pleasing shape, he can parade in the garb of an angel of light; and, under the thin disguise of irreligious kindness, he is today plying his unholy trade in the world. What kindness saves an orphan from starvation, only to rob the orphan's mind of belief in the existence of God, is a curse, and no blessing. The coin that goes to purchase bread for the fell purpose of blasting a child's instinctive dread of hell, was minted in the lower regions; and the man or woman, who under the cloak of benevolent humaneness stamps out of a human heart faith in a hereafter, and chills a human heart's ardor in the pursuit of virtue, is doing the work of Satan, and shall have as reward for his or her pains the inheritance of the damned. The teachers, who, in spite of every-day experience and the plain dictates of common sense, profess to think that mere cultivation of the intellect, without regard to training of the heart, constitutes education, and that a man ascends in the scale of citizenship the farther he recedes from his Creator, and the more thoroughly he forgets his moral obligations towards the Creator, are teaching a doctrine of devils, and must reap for their unfortunate country a harvest of disaster.

Christian mercy mends body and mind without harm to the soul, because Christ is its motive and love of God is its life.

And it must be ours, as members of the Catholic Church, to teach misguided men the compatibility of genuine charity with childlike faith and ennobling religion. Catholicity has poverty for corner-stone. Her founder, her Head in Heaven, was born poor, lived poor, and died poor. He shunned the company of the rich. He cursed wealth with the most solemn of anathemas, to court the conversation of the needy and consecrate works of mercy as the formulary of salvation. If by an impossibility the Catholic Church should ever fall away from her exalted prerogative of mother of the poor, she would in that hour forfeit her charter and cease to be the kingdom of God on earth. In a world where difference of fortune is a fixed law, we shall always have hungry to feed, naked to clothe, sick to visit. No age in history has been without its army of beggars; and, as long as unequal distribution of wealth continues the order of the day, poverty shall remain a time-honored institution, and the Church of the poor shall safeguard their interests, preaching in season and out of season wealth's duty of mercy towards life's unfortunates.

In her catechism she catalogues with care and in detail what needs of the neighbor appeal to pity, and make loudest call on charity. She divides mercy's works into seven corporal and seven spiritual; ministering first to the body, and then to the soul. "Feed the hungry," she says, "give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, harbor the harborless, comfort the sick, visit the imprisoned, bury the dead." "Convert the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive injuries, pray for the living and the dead." The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and charitable institutions without number, offering asylum to every conceivable ill to which this flesh is heir, provide abundant charity for the body; and the alms of the faithful make it possible for men and women consecrated to charity to work miracles in the amelioration of the needy and wretched. Catholics must be among the foremost in running to their neighbor's assistance with financial aid and the ministrations of charity. Their purse-strings must be ever open, they must go deep down into their pockets, when the cry of distress reaches their ear. God has promised Heaven to a cup of cold water given in His name.

He has signified a willingness to count mercy done the least of His brethren kindness done Himself, and to measure our worthiness of Heaven by our charity. But, while attentive to the bodily wants of the neighbor, we Catholics must be more scrupulously mindful of his spiritual needs. We are in virtue of our calling a band of apostles, consecrated to prayer and works of zeal. We are soldiers in the kingdom, and we have to do first and foremost with men's souls. The seven spiritual works of mercy are ours by preference, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ looks to us principally for their accomplishment. We must convert the sinner by earnest prayer, by the example of a holy life and by the kind office of a word in season. The kingdom, for whose coming we sigh with the warmth of impatience, is a kingdom of souls; and we can never rest till the souls around us belong to their rightful master, and acknowledge Jesus for King. We must instruct the ignorant. The world is in sore need of knowledge of religion. To make this knowledge grow and flourish among men, we must do even more than pray. We must fling over the darkness of a world's ignorance the blinding light of the gospel. To become teachers, we must first learn; and zeal for good books, zeal for sermons and instructions, is the first requisite. Allure others to church-services and devotions. Men are abroad on the streets these holy hours, women are entertaining at home, simply because they know nothing of the transports of joy God's grace can awaken in hearts, when their owners kneel before His altar-throne, and in the midst of incense, and prayer, and hymns hold silent and sweet communion with Him. We must counsel the doubtful and comfort the sorrowful. The brutality of unkindness never wears a more hideous aspect than when studied in connection with the scourging at the pillar. The soft courtesies of life, the word in season, the smile of welcome that keeps a hunted brother from fleeing to the desert of despair to die, all these lesser virtues assume a more pleasing shape, when coupled with our man of sorrows among the heartless demons of Pilate's soldiery. Pity for the friendless is something consecrated after that night of agony close against the reddened pillar. To take the part of a stranger, is to take the part of Christ; to stand beside him as a defense, is to stand beside

Christ in need; to whisper comfort to His crushed heart, is to steal up to the pillar, and bid the Heart of Christ be brave. We must bear wrongs patiently, and forgive injuries. In the house of Caiphas Christ was mocked and spat upon. For you and me He welcomed a whole night of such treatment. See Him standing there, with His eyes on the ground; and learn from the spectacle to be patient under the same affliction. We are daily mocked by heartless friends, and the example of Christ before Caiphas can keep us from doing murder. Jesus with His cross for pulpit thought no virtue worthier of first place in His sermon than this spirit of forgiveness. We are sons of the one Father, and our elder brother Christ wants us to be separated from the rest of the world by this line of mutual love. To rob us of all excuse for hatred based on wrongs done us, He in His dying hour forgave, and asked God in Heaven to forgive, men whose hands were red with His adorable blood. We must pray for the living and the dead; for the dead, that the period of their stay in pain's prison-house may be shortened; for the living, that they may abandon sin, grow in holiness, and at last come into the inheritance of the saints. The world is fast settling towards the feet of God, the nations are drawing nearer to His throne; and we must spare no effort to get some men inside the circle of God's friends, and push others closer to His holy presence. God is the owner of men's souls. He purchased them on Calvary at the expense of His blood and His life. And all hell is striving to rob God of His property. Hear the Lord God's cry for help, and run to His assistance. With our coöperation in prayer, He can do everything. He can save the world. Without it, He can do nothing; and He must sit down in idle patience, and watch demons drag to the lowest pits of hell these sons of His tears, these sons of His blood. Propitiate the judge who on the last day shall settle your eternal destiny for weal or woe, and propitiate Him by prayer for a world's salvation.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Galatians, 3; 16–22 *Gospel, St. Luke 17; 11–19*

"Ten lepers met Him."
—St. Luke 17, 12.

St. Augustine is authority for the statement that these lepers are types of men in the Church tainted with wrong doctrines. He bases his opinion on the very nature of leprosy and on three remarkable circumstances connected with the parable; the form of address employed by the sick men, the medicine prescribed by the Saviour and the terms descriptive of their cure. In addressing Christ as master or teacher, these men acknowledge themselves afflicted with a malady open to cure by the single way of instruction. Christ orders them to the priests, "the angels of the Lord of Hosts, because the lips of God's priests keep wisdom and the people shall learn the law at their mouth." Malachy, 2, 7. Finally, they are said not to have been healed, but to have been made clean, a term clearly suggestive of escape from the ravages of heresy or wrong doctrine. This leprosy is a strange sickness. Though it invariably proves fatal, it is accompanied by none of the disabling effects common to other diseases. It leaves its victim for years in the full enjoyment of seeming health, able to discharge the various duties of domestic and social life, and a prey to no functional disorder. Spots on the skin are its first symptoms; these spots give place to sores; by slow degrees the body's extremities fall away, and death closes the process. Leprosy's spots are vivid reminder of the patched appearance wrong religions wear. Truth is uniform, and Catholicity's proudest boast is the consistency everywhere conspicuous in her practices and her dogmas. She is one in the fullest sense of the term; one in doctrine, one in government, one in ritual. The sects outside our Church contradict one another and contradict them-

selves. The multitudinous errors they teach give the lie to the few truths they borrow from Christianity. The reverence they profess for the Sacred Writings becomes mockery in view of the right to private judgment. Faith in Jesus, so forward on their tongues, is hypocritical cant in view of the ease with which they disregard Christ's teaching in the matter of confession and marriage. No fad is too scandalous to find supporters among them, no religious whim is too wild to get and hold their attention. From divorce in New England to polygamy in Utah, from free love and concubinage in New York to anarchy and socialism in Chicago, every different phase of moral corruption has its upholders; and all without exception appeal to the Bible for proof of their theories. Christian Science and its faith-cure enrich an old lady in Boston with money contributed by her gullible followers. Sun-worship borrowed from the effete East, has its disciples in the so-called capital of culture and refinement. The Holy Jumpers perform their weird antics under the very shadow of Bunker Hill Monument. Greed, lust, intellectual pride are sowing everywhere the sad harvest of irreligious principles, bound in the nature of things to surfeit the years ahead with crime and immorality. And all the while, like the lepers of parable, men in the Church tainted with wrong religious theories wear the outward appearance of soundness. The evil within them betrays itself only in spots, and they easily contrive to hide the spots by judicious and plentiful use of hypocrisy and seeming piety. Brethren, hold to your faith. Already the mystery of iniquity worketh. Stand fast to the traditions which you have learned. Unbelief is in the air, and that disease is contagious. We live and move among lepers of the sort; and, like its type in the story, like leprosy, unfaith can be propagated by contact with unbelievers. Unfaith, flat refusal to accept truth on the authority of God's word, is a horrid crime, as hideous as the sin of the angels; and it is the unlovely mark attaching to men and women outside of our Church. Could we but see the sin in all its native ugliness, we should shun its perpetrators with more genuine horror than we avoid leprosy, small-pox, or the deadliest plague. Victims to this disease are in the eyes of faith noisome sores from head to foot, but they sail into ordinary every-day vision

respectable citizens, their wounds invisible and sprinkled over with the powder of society's suave and persuasive methods. The devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape, and the vilest scoundrels history knows have been, in no few instances, mirrors of fashion for their contemporaries. Avoid the danger. Our young men and young women are too ready to condone heresy, because this or that particular heretic has a round face or smooth manners. Beauty is not virtue, easy content is sometimes a mark of perdition; and sin is quite compatible with a smile, and a laugh, and a gay demeanor. You are the sons and daughters of God. Have no part with Belial in even a social way. Toleration begets patience with heresy, patience becomes a custom or habit, custom grows towards esteem, dread of the disease weakens within us, and contamination follows. Ultimately our way of thinking shapes our outward conduct; and, when minds are right, hearts seldom go astray without hope of cure. We could, if time allowed, touch on the practical harm done Catholics by contact with Protestants. The evil permeates every nook and corner of life. The cloister itself is not altogether free from its destructive influence; and the laity, men and women in the world, are more open to damage, because of their environment and want of familiarity with accurate theology. Loose notions about the inspiration of Scripture are everywhere prevalent; the binding force of the Church's decisions is questioned with unbecoming ease; contact with amiable outsiders is responsible for the growing opinion that Catholicity is not exclusively the Church of Christ, that divorce is not the evil it is painted, that mixed marriages are oftener a blessing then otherwise, that the marriage-relations ought to be adjusted along the more comforting lines of "New England polygamy," a name fastened to absolute divorce by a writer in the *Princeton Review*. These and a thousand other sad mistakes, made by even well intentioned Catholics, are important enough to invite serious attention to the danger. Wear no man's colors! Walk in no man's procession! Our Church is the depositary of truth. With an unfailing Church for guide, and an infallible Pope for teacher, we Catholics have clear, fixed and definite views on all the several questions that harass the minds of outsiders. The views of Church and Pope are our

views; and God is their ultimate author. In New England along the country roads one often encounters this notice, "Railroad Crossing—Stop, Listen, Look!" And I say to you, when tempted because of the pernicious example around you to lean toward modernism, and take up with fads and fancies savoring of religious indifference and tolerant of every pious absurdity, Stop, Listen, Look! Stop! Prudence bids you halt. Be in no hurry to change the tight views you entertained when young, views you got at Sunday School, views you got at your mother's knee. Listen! In hours of doubt seek advice at the hands of the Church and her priests. She is the custodian of God's word, and her priests are her duly accredited representatives, men teaching with authority. Look! Shape your conduct along the lines of Christ's divine life in imitation of His Mother and the Saints. Scorn the progress that means aimless drifting from one species of error to another. We have high ideals. Christ is our model, and we must follow Him. To follow means to watch with intense earnestness, to keep the eyes forever fixed on Him we follow. Christ is our model, and we cannot sit down for a rest till satisfied that our lives are faith reproductions of His own.

Sin is a species of leprosy, and the havoc it works in the soul is of a kind with the havoc leprosy works in the body. Centuries of civilization have all but completely stamped out this horrible disease, and today only scattered traces of it exist here and there in the world. But the cruel laws enacted in early times to check the spread of leprosy, bear witness to the ravages of this terrible scourge. Its future victim had first warning of his approaching fate in the appearance of brown or white blotches with running sores. In the Old Law, when an Israelite thought himself smitten, he was legally bound to go show himself to the priests. If they adjudged him stricken with the dread disease, he had to take leave of family and friends, don the gray and hooded garment of the leper and, armed with a bell to warn strangers of his presence, make his way to the heart of the desert, to wander forsaken till death put a period to his pains. The disease was slow in its ravages, but terribly sure. Cure was out of the question, and by successive stages corruption attacked and consumed one part of the body

after another. The face, robbed of the different organs of sense, lost all semblance of a human being. The fingers went joint by joint; then, the hands; then, the arms. The whole body was subjected to this process of waste and decay to the end. And all the while the unfortunate must wander an outcast among men. Because medicine knew no cure for leprosy, the law took this severe measure to prevent its spread by contagion.

Scripture everywhere writes this loathsome disease the type and symbol of sin; and the picture is vivid enough and true enough to the life to arrest attention. The image is somewhat lost on us, because sin works all its harm in the soul; and the soul, simple and spiritual as it is, never falls under the observation of our bodily eyes. But, aided by faith and philosophy, we can in part conjecture the sad and leprous condition of a soul in the state of sin. Viewed by the all-holy eyes of God, such a soul is the consummation of ugliness and deformity. It is the one object on earth able to create intense disgust in God's mind. A sinner in God's estimation is an outcast among men, unworthy to consort with even the brutes. And, if we could but see sin in all its native and naked hideousness, we should ourselves deem it just, right and proper to forbid sinners intercourse with society.

Leprosy was never more contagious than sin. This very circumstance renders scandal the heaviest of evils. Other sinners can count with security on Christ's forgiveness and pity; but scandal-givers meet with but small mercy at His adorable hands. As He Himself graphically puts their case, "it were better for them that a millstone were tied to their neck, and they were drowned in the depths of the sea." St. Matthew, 18, 6. We accord the same fate to a superflous kitten or dog. The penalty is not out of proportion with their crime. They are doing on earth the work of devils in hell. They know what lot awaits them after death, and misery loves company. They spare neither time, labor, nor health to fill hell to the top. They are plague-spots in the community. They break up families, they wreck young and unsuspecting lives, they ruin innocence.

The most depressing feature connected with leprosy was that sense of hoplelessness and helplessness it created. Once smitten,

its victim knew no avenue of escape. And hope makes every other ill of life endurable. A habit of sin leads by slow stages to the same awful condition of despair. One writer calls the sins we do ropes or chains, employed by the devil to fasten us to his service. When a man once allows himself to be bound hand and foot by these chains and ropes, it is next to impossible for him to break entirely away.

And yet sin is not incurable. God forbid. There is balm in Gilead for the repentant sinner. God be praised for it, the story of Magdalen, the story of the dying thief, are golden pages in the gospel, and no mortal hand can remove or mutilate them. With this fact in mind, the Church, our Mother, and the Spouse of Jesus Christ, unceasingly addresses to sinners these words of today's gospel, "Go show yourselves to the priest." He alone among men can with a word clear the soul of every trace of disease.

Our Church knows whereof she speaks, when she issues this command; and she has God's own word for warrant. Her priests derive their commission to forgive from the 20th chapter of St. John's Gospel, and the language Christ there employs is exceptionally clear and explicit.

While on this topic of leprosy, I cannot but remark the close analogy in force between the symptoms of this disease of antiquity and the characteristic signs of unbelief, that plague-sore of our modern civilization. Unbelief, like leprosy, shows itself in spots. It is mixed always with good. I venture the statement, that no system of false religion, today current among men, is without some one good point or other, specious enough to hold the allegiance of its followers and the divided respect of its opponents. Protestantism in general professes unbounded reverence for the Scriptures, though its interpretation of the Sacred Writings leaves them without a shred of substance. The Mormons swear by passages in the Old Testament, favorable to their pet practice of polygamy, though they shut their eyes to whatever portions of the New Testament abrogate this custom of the patriarchs. Mrs. Eddy and Mr. Dowie build their faith on scattered sentences, wherein the cure of disease is set forth as a function of the true Church, though they neglect all the traditions of centuries, along with whatever texts promulgate

the establishment and constitution of the Church and its sacraments. Some men refuse to accept the Church's dogma regarding hell, because it is at variance with their short-sighted views of God's mercy; others, because in their opinion the manifold ills of life are penalty enough for the crimes and follies of men. "One Church is as good as another," and kindred principles are so conducive to peace, and so antagonistic to jarring war, that they commend themselves to the unthinking devotees of quiet and laziness. In the lexicon of this world the Cross is folly. Stout battle for the right, when all the loud-mouthed advocates of evil are making pandemonium round, is already come to be reckoned imprudence. Sturdy reliance on God's promises, unwavering trust in God's messages, hope and faith are trifled with and made vain by our next-door neighbors; and hope and faith are regarded by otherwise clever people as religious weakness and superstitious ignorance. Mortification of the flesh and restraint of its appetites, so much cherished when Christianity was young, are now considered little better than suicide; and the virtues of the Early Fathers of the Desert are reputed crimes by the votaries of modern enligtenment.

And what is the remedy? "Go show yourselves to the priest." In matters of religious doubt, we must consult God's oracle; and this oracle is the Church. The Church, the pillar and ground of truth, is no airy figment of the imagination, but a body of believers as visible to the eye and as open to consultation as the tribunals and legislative assemblies of the land. God's priests are the accredited representatives of God's Church, and they speak with authority borrowed from no less a power than God.

Not long ago, a late head of Harvard treated the world to his views on what he labels the coming religion of the world. In a lengthy paper, dealing in the main with scientific progress, the spread of democracy, and the growth of charity among men, he tries to show that Unitarianism, the religion he professes with a handful of deluded followers in New England, is destined to be the Christianity of the twentieth century. This good man ought to use his head. He ought to be a thinker, not a rambler. He ought to get down to straight mental work,

and quit piecing meaningless phrases together. He ought to get back to first principles. Religion is worship of God, and is quite independent of scientific progress, forms of government, and humanitarianism. Christianity is the religion established by Christ 1900 years ago, and it is going to be in the twentieth century exactly what it was in the first. There can be no Christianity without Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Christianity that refuses to see God in Christ is but a refinement of Judaism. For Christians of this stamp the Messiah is not yet come, and they are Jews or nothing. When they deny the divinity of Christ, Unitarians are outside the pale of Christianity. They are untrue to one of the three planks in their platform, the leadership of Jesus. Jesus proclaimed Himself God, worked miracles to prove Himself God, rewarded Peter's profession of faith in His divinity, died on the cross rather than retract the statement and riveted matters by raising Himself from the grave the third day after His death. Jesus declared Himself God, and allowed His listeners without a word of correction to take His declaration in strict and literal sense. Unitarians profess to follow the leadership of Christ, and in the same breath refuse Him divinity. This certainly is a strange way to follow a leader; and thinkers able to think paltry nonsense of the sort, are, to say the least, unsafe guides. They virtually hold that the best way to catch a car is to run away from it; and if that is not a species of insanity, it has all the marks of a high degree of intoxication.

Fatherhood connotes Son. The Son of God ought to be Himself God; and Christ as Son of the Father is God. Without the divinity of Christ the Fatherhood of God means little. The brotherhood of man means as little, unless Christ the bond of the relationship is more than mere man. We are all members of the one family, because Christ, our elder brother through birth from the Virgin Mary, is Himself Son of the Father, and therefore God. This one circumstance makes the brotherhood of man a sublimer fact than the union in force between sons of the same father. Choose ye, therefore. But, to get back to first principles.

We Catholics should be able to give to honest searchers for the truth a reason for the faith within us. But it would be

absurd to expect every Catholic to be able to put his finger on the text in Holy Scripture, where, for instance, our Lord commends confession, or on the text which furnishes us with a motive for our belief in Purgatory. The Church does not expect her children to take away from their every-day duties the time that would be required to arrive at this knowledge of things. The only duty common to all in this matter is to implicitly believe whatever the Church tells them to believe, and to do whatever the Church, God's mouthpiece, tells them to do. It belongs not to laymen to argumentatively prove the truth of her doctrine. She has set apart and trained men of talent, and authorized them to answer for her, whenever heresy raises a difficulty. These champions are her priests and theologians, and our faith is safe from attack in their hands. They can refute, and they have a thousand times already refuted, every petty objection made by unbelievers to Catholic points of doctrine. They can convince truth's enemies, but they cannot persuade them to abandon their errors. They can make every single article of our faith as certain and sure as the sunset, or the simplest sum in arithmetic; but they cannot bend men's wills. They hold the key to men's minds; but, when it comes to entering a man's heart and implanting in it a generous love for the truth, they are powerless. They can only stand outside and knock. God Himself, omnipotent as He is, can do no more. A man's heart is absolutely his own property and possession. This is the one satisfactory explanation of why, after so much has been written, said and done in defense of the truth, the world is still full of men and women, who refuse to accept the truth. I know men who would deny that the sun rose this morning, were it at all inconvenient for them to admit the fact. Heresy is not a sin of the head, it is a sin of the heart; and on sins of the heart the fires of hell shall feed forever.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Galatians 5; 16–24 *Gospel, St. Matthew 6; 24–33*

"You cannot serve God and mammon."
—St. Matthew 6, 24.

In today's gospel the Lord Jesus is emphatically a teacher, a teacher possessed of wisdom denied the rest of men, a teacher able to invest that wisdom with beauties of language not taught in the schools. His ideas are of the sublimest, and carry conviction to the heart. His words are of the sweetest, and fall like music on the ear. The pictures He employs to embellish His Heavenly doctrine are harmonies in color and fall as a balm on tired fancies. Birds, and lilies, and Solomon! What a blending of the beautiful and the grand! And the frame is worthy of the picture. How the lesson grows on the mind, when presented in so striking and so divine a way! The Master wants to wean men's hearts from a solicitude, that wearies much and profits little. He is inculcating in a new way that old truth insisted on in the house of Lazarus, when He reprimanded Martha for finding fault with Mary. "Martha, Martha, one thing is necessary; Mary hath chosen the better part," rest in the quiet of prayer at the feet of the Saviour. Jesus is God, and His intimate familiarity with the natural qualities of universal creation is the secret of His large wisdom. He is as well acquainted with those things of mystery we call men's hearts as we are with the letters of the alphabet or the numbers of arithmetic; and He can discourse of their inner workings with ease, and accuracy, and certainty. Men's hearts are an open book in His hands, and hide from His eyes just nothing at all. He is their fashioner, their maker; and He knows the wide extent and the narrow limits of their capacity. They are vast enough to embrace an infinite God, and can look forward to satiety only in Heaven, where God seen face to face crowds

out every lesser presence. But here on earth, in spite of their vastness, men's hearts are necessarily taxed to their utmost by any one big interest. Two big interests, if they contain an element of mutual contradiction, have small room in a heart, and at once fall to fighting for the supremacy. Earth and Heaven are two such interests, wealth and virtue, luxury and salvation, mammon and God. They are of so wide a range that one or other bounds the horizon of every man's life. They are so absorbing that mankind can well be classified into men of the world and men of God, into money-seekers and God's paupers, into the goats and the sheep of the day of judgment. The element of contradiction these interests contain is not native to them. It is a growth for which our perverse and crooked selves are responsible. For earth and all the pretty things included in that single word, were meant to be pleasant ways to our true home, Heaven; and wealth was meant to minister to sweet charity; and the ease of peace, luxury's crowning good, is the lasting possession of the sons of God. No man can serve any two such interests as masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. God is a jealous lover, and we know what that means. He must have no rival in our affections. Rather than submit to the humiliation of competing with other persons and other interests for our favor, He will throw us over, abandon us, and bestow His love on souls more appreciative of His kindness. Earth's lovers can brook rivals for the hand to which they aspire because of the equality in force between man and man, and because of man's unfortunate dependence on others for happiness. But God is supreme, and God is vitally conscious of His absolute independence. Whether men love or hate, God's happiness is the same, and men alone are the losers. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Ever since the day Christ proclaimed it as hard for the rich to enter Heaven as it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, greed of money has been in open contradiction with a life of virtue. Ye cannot serve God and mammon; and the world is mammon, this swirling panorama of wealth, and pleasure, and honor. Mammon is money; mammon is sinful pleasure; mammon is mad ambition, ready to trample God's law under foot, and climb to worldly glory over the ruins of violated conscience.

The world is at war with God, and today's gospel reads like a call to arms. We are face to face with that stirring picture, painted by the soldier-saint Ignatius. Lucifer in a plain near Babylon, the city of confusion, summons his warriors to the fray. He is seated on a high throne, its sides wrapped in flames and smoke, his countenance embodying all the ugliness of sin, commingled with hell's terrors. Everything is noise and disorder. There is no peace in sin, and the way of the wicked is hard. The lofty position his arrogance assumes is a type of sin's tyranny over its victims. A man long subject to wicked habits is the most abject of slaves, and behaves on occasions as if thoroughly abandoned of free will. The attendant flames and smoke betoken the restlessness, the blindness, that settle like curses on the heads and hearts of sinners. Nothing is so hostile to faith and grace as continuance in wickedness, and for every defection from the Church some cherished passion is responsible. The faith of children during the happy years of their innocence is free from all shadow of doubt. Men and women continue strong in their faith, till temptation and sin first make havoc in their deluded souls, and rob them of their baptismal whiteness. Those leaping tongues of fire are fit emblem of the kind of rest sin procures for its slaves. It promises them satisfaction, and fulfils its lying promise by flooding their souls with unhappiness and discontent. The inexperienced sometimes think that a certain step forward in the field of pleasure will constitute a limit, beyond which they will not aspire to go. They foolishly fancy that this or that gratification will induce sleep, and put them in quiet possession of perpetual rest. But they are sadly mistaken. If they take the coveted step, they will find to their cost that satisfaction, and peace, and calm are farther off than ever, that new wants spring up in place of the old ones, and that life is all too short to arrive at the consummation of their hopes. In the midst, therefore, of noise, fire and smoke Satan exalted sits, and with threatening gestures summons together demons without number, to scatter them up and down the whole earth on harm intent. And what an army heeds his call; the devils of hell, the sinners of earth, all only too greedy to drag souls to eternal death for company. A wicked companion is an agent in the

employ of the enemy of souls, and scandal is the work of a demon from hell. The world is full of monsters, who halt at no crime, simply because their employer has present rewards to offer. In business transactions with Lucifer there is no long waiting for wages, no need of patient faith and trust. And the chieftain's war-orders are always the same. He excites his recruits with much bluster to lay hands on men, bind them with ropes and chains, and drag them first of all to greed of money. Greed of glory is the next easy step to perdition, and the triumph closes with sin's burial in the hell of unholy pleasure. Wealth, honor, pleasure, these are the slippery highways to wickedness. When men once walk these ways their descent into every kind of crime is headlong. These passions are chains and ropes; and, when they once tightly bind a man hand and foot, it is next to impossible to break entirely away from them and return to God. These emissaries of Lucifer are likewise skillful warriors. They are masters in the art of concealing features likely to hurt their cause. They cover with flowers the road along which they drive their herd of dumb cattle, with never a word of the pit of fire at its farther end. Only when secure against escape, are their victims confronted with the terrors of eternity. Deathbeds conceal nothing. In that unlovely hour the demons paint this section of a sinner's lot most vividly, rob his mind of quiet and calm, and prevent him from having recourse to the almighty forgiveness of God.

Turn we now to the fonder form of our Lord and Captain Christ. See Him in a lovely field of grass and flowers near Jerusalem, moving familiarly among His friends, with all the conscious dignity and majesty of a God made man, and the beauty of Heaven in His face. The soft green grass at His feet and the odorous flowers are memorials of virtue. Virtue, like the waving grass, rests the eye; virtue, like the field-flowers, smells sweet in men's nostrils, and the way of the just winds in and out through gardens. The Lord Christ plants His colors close to Jerusalem, the city of peace, where stir, and bustle, and noise are missing. Saints are conspicuous only for their silent regularity. They never attract notice. Everybody feels at home in their company. There is nothing strained, there is no affectation in their conduct. Notice how the Lord of creation

chooses apostles, disciples, servants, to send them up and down the world to break the bread of His saving doctrine to every tribe and people. What an august company is this army of the Lord Christ! All the virtue the world has ever known. Everything honorable, heroic in human history; martyrs, hermits, virgins. And by the grace of God we are soldiers in this army. Remembering the pernicious activity of the demons, we must be up and doing. The devil never says, enough; he is never driven from the field by defeat. Witness temptation. This perseverance, this faculty of never giving up, is the devil's only virtue; and, to win the battle, we must never tire, never dream of surrender. The words Christ addresses to His servants and friends, enlisted in this grand enterprise, must keep forever ringing in our ears. He exhorts us to save His souls. The world is His by the double right of creation and redemption. He died in torments on Calvary to purchase men's souls; and all hell is stirring to make void the purchase, and rob His cross of victory. Satan is God's enemy. He cannot attack God Himself, and so wreaks his vengeance on souls God died to save. He was a homicide from the beginning. His followers spare neither time, labor, nor health to fill hell to the top. They break up families, they wreck young and unsuspecting lives, they ruin innocence, they are plague-spots in every community. We have to do stout battle with these enemies of the Lord. We have to counteract their evil influence in the world by fighting along the lines mapped out for us by our Leader. The weapons He puts into our hands are poverty, love of contempt, love of suffering. We must begin with ourselves. The world refuses to learn from any but saints. We must, then, wear ourselves out in the service of others, laboring to bring mankind by the art of gentle suasion and example to poverty of spirit, and, if the thing be feasible, to poverty of fact, in truth and in deed. Humility must bloom, and blossom, and bear fruit in genuine love of scorn and contempt. Poverty, love of contempt, love of suffering; these are the entrance gates to virtue's gardens.

And love of poverty, the first step in the process, is the sermon Christ preaches in today's gospel. He wants us to go to the birds and the lilies for a lesson in wisdom. These birds

of the air lead a life altogether devoid of care, a free and easy life. They borrow no worry from the morrow. They sing God's praises while the light lasts, go to bed with the sun, sleep with content through the night, and are up with the dawn to begin another day's round of melody. When our air first hints of approaching frost, they rise into the sky, and journey by easy flights to southern homes, where roses never die and groves are green all the year round. And, the lilies; why, the lilies begin as little seeds in the ground, unfold themselves slowly to the light, and all the summer through bask lazily in the sunshine. God meant us to be birds in the matter of food, He meant us to be lilies in the matter of raiment. His just man, the prospective model of future generations, was built on other lines than such as now obtain in creation. He was to have stretched out his hand and eaten. He was to have hidden with no garments at all the magnificent proportions, the rounded limbs, that make ancient statuary a marvel of beauty and a joy forever. But sin intervened, sin dragged its slow length of slime along the fields; and weeds now prosper, where the fruits of the earth without constant care and tillage fall away and die. Some men are farmers, and harvest crops; and other some slave in our cities for the coin that buys the produce of these others' labors. Clothing is a necessary curse; and, while some men weave and spin, other some toil all day and far into the night to procure wherewith to purchase. And the wonder of the thing is that men in their folly render this curse of slavery, this curse of toil, a heavier burden than God, the author of the curse, meant it to be. We are no longer birds; we are no longer lilies; but we are out of harmony with the designs of our Creator, unless we retain some little of the ease and freedom of the birds, unless we retain some little of the idleness of the lilies. We must not be over-solicitous about what we shall eat, we must not be over-solicitous about what we shall wear. Man has a bigger interest in life than food, and drink, and raiment; and, when he allows any other consideration to crowd that interest out, he is an unreasoning fool. The Kingdom of God and His justice, the beatitude of Heaven and the hard blows with which it is won, eternal bliss and the martyrdom of virtue are that bigger interest clamoring for

recognition and relegated in this business world of today to a very dark corner. Of course, a man must eat; and, since food comes of money, and money represents work, the man who remains altogether idle will infallibly starve. But there is a measure! And the man who works so unremittingly, as not to pray, will, perhaps, escape death from starvation; but will inevitably slip into hell, when he at last comes to die. The man who habitually stays away from Mass on Sunday to turn a dishonest penny, may, perhaps, succeed in amassing wealth, and houses, and lands; but he will one day leave his possessions behind to be squandered by reckless heirs, and will go into the presence of his Judge empty-handed. We have a Father, who knoweth our needs. This Father gives elasticity of wing to the birds, Solomon-like splendor to the lilies; and He will not let us go hungry and naked, if we make His glory the target of our ambitions. Or if He lets us go hungry, if He lets us go naked, He will season our hunger with a sweetness luxury never tasted, He will invest our rags with a golden glow that never yet rimmed the brows of kings.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Galatians 5, 25; 6; 1–11 *Gospel, St. Luke 7; 11–16*

"A dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow."

—St. Luke 7, 12.

Death is a stern reality. It was meant by God for a punishment; and, when God undertakes a thing, He accomplishes His purpose. He has, therefore, hedged death round about with thorns, and it hurts of its very nature. In one awful moment it cuts off its victim from life and life's thousand circumstances; it buries its victim's friends in a night of gloom and sorrow, that full often knows no future morning. Death is a sad messenger at whatever door it knocks; but an infinite pathos attaches to the death of the young. "For age to die, is right;" some poet sings, "for youth, is wrong;" and one of the most melancholy sights earth knows is the deathbed of a young man or maiden, stricken down by disease or accident in the bloom of health. When death puts a period to lives throbbing full of gifts and graces, it deals its heaviest blow. Such a death is so like fruit blown down by the wind, so like wanton waste and unfulfilled ambition, that it ministers to more copious tears, and awakens a more regretful yearning. The funeral procession, winding its way down Naim's streets, and met by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was friendship's last tribute to the son of a widowed mother. She had already tasted the bitterness of death in the demise of the boy's father, and in the boy's own removal she experiences a loneliness that never yet fastened on her heart. Picture to yourself the scene. A widowed mother, marching with all the resignation at her disposal out through the city-gates, and down to the valley to bury her only son. What a melancholy spectacle! Can history recall a sadder sight? Pardon me for thinking that it can; and every day wit-

nesses funeral processions, that in the eyes of faith work fiercer havoc, and more unsparingly harrow the souls of women and men. Monica in pursuit of her sinner son Augustine, bestirs an acuter and a wider pity than even the widow of Naim. There is a worse death than that of the body; and, when it overtakes a child, the mother is absolutely inconsolable. The body must soon or late die, anyhow; but the soul was meant to live forever in the quiet enjoyment of happiness without end. Harm done the body is mended with time; but, when calamity touches the soul, the hurt is without remedy, and an eternity of medicine can work no cure. Hence it happens that earth is acquainted with a more melancholy sight than even the deathbed of youth; and the principals in this sadder picture are a fond mother and a boy or girl dead to grace, buried in the depths of sin. Mothers cannot stay the inexorable hand of death, they cannot arrest the last breath on a child's lips, and bid it linger; but by prayer, and by good example, and by an early Catholic education, they can reduce to something small, indeed, the chances of a spiritual death, the chances of a godless youth and a godless manhood.

I recognize three classes of mothers. Some are a reproach to the name they bear, dead to Catholic instinct, and stumbling blocks to their children. Others are the crowning glory of Christian womanhood, alive to a sense of their duty, and blessed with sons and daughters, who reflect new lustre on their parents' name. Others again are angels in the household, living examples of piety, and yet for some mysterious reason, known only to God, disappointed in their children, doomed to years of patient suffering on account of a child's untoward conduct. Every street in our city can count gray-haired mothers, widows, who nightly on their knees pound their breasts and wring their hands, bewailing the sad lot of a son or daughter deaf to a mother's prayers, deaf to the grace of God. And the grief of these mothers cuts to the very bone, because, forsooth, they have their own early negligences to blame for the impiety of their children. These mothers taught their children how to break the law of God, and disobedience is a palatable lesson on the lips of the young. By bad example they accustomed their children to familiarity with wrong. They made light in their

presence of the need of prayer, of Sunday Mass, of every religious observance. They had themselves little or no respect for God's service, and they were at small pains to conceal their impiety. Worst of all, these parents in some instances ran counter to God's wishes by sending their children to godless schools. To secure some worldly advantage, they scorned the advice of their Church's pastors, and now they reap the reward of their folly. Our Church, wise with the wisdom of God, has nothing more at heart than the Catholic education of her children; and nearly every house of prayer has its own parish-school. Without making the practice an inviolable rule, she wants Catholic parents to send their children to these parish-schools, where knowledge of religion keeps equal pace with the other branches of science. She bitterly deplores the existence of godless schools, and yet she tolerates their use. But she burdens the consciences of all Catholics, who take advantage of such schools, with the responsibility of shielding their children from the danger of perversion and loss of faith. Fathers and mothers have duties of the sternest sort towards the children they brought into the world, duties for the faithful discharge of which God is going to hold them strictly responsible. And among these duties the chiefest, next to that of procuring them meat and drink, is the duty of furnishing them with an opportunity to improve their minds and their hearts. Parents cannot satisfy this obligation by halves. They cannot please God, they cannot win for themselves the benediction of Heaven by setting their children down in the midst of intellectual plenty, at the same time exposing their little hearts to the danger of moral starvation. Parents may try to deceive themselves, they may even succeed in half persuading themselves that their duty in this matter begins and ends with the training secured at schools, where God is a stranger, where faith in God's venerable Church is either scorned with the cold contempt of silence or openly reviled and attacked. But they are disloyal to conscience; and parents, who entrust the early years of their offspring to teachers, who have no commission to teach, must have misgivings, must feel at times doubtful about the wisdom of their conduct, must catch glimpses of the curse they are calling down on their own heads, of the awful destiny they are slowly but

surely weaving for their unsuspecting sons and daughters. Men may argue as they will, they may allege whatever excuse, it forever remains true that a Catholic, a thoroughly Catholic education alone suits a Catholic. In virtue of our calling we are God's chosen people. We are the children of God's tears. We were born to Christ in the shadows and torments of Calvary. At every step in our journey through life we Catholics, like our Lord and Captain Christ, run up against the cross and the crown of thorns. And, thanks to the good old fathers and mothers, who surrounded our childhood with memories of this sober truth, who put us and kept us at schools, which the contagion of self-indulgence and doubt never entered, we know what to expect; we never turn aside from the path of duty because the sacred emblem of Christ's sacred Passion casts a shadow along it. And children, who derive their training from non-Catholic teachers, children who frequent schools not distinctively Catholic, are subjected to temptations in this matter, that they cannot in justice be expected to overcome. They cannot possibly grow up sturdy Catholics, Catholics from the soles of their feet to the tops of their heads. Some little of infection is bound to creep into their lives, and with it enervating indifference, ruinous laxity of conscience, licentiousness and every species of evil that modern society knows. If God is a secondary consideration at school, God is going to be a secondary consideration in the arena of life. If God is crowded into the background at school, God is not going to be pushed far to the front afterwards. Success in business pursuits, success in the friendships of the great, success in the goods of earth, wealth, fame, prosperity, all these interests must of necessity create an uproar, must of necessity trample to death the interests of religion, if religion fails to secure in early years a solid footing. Therefore, Catholic parents, if you want to be a pleasant memory to your children, make any and every effort to procure for them an education. If you want your children to prove a comfort to your age and a credit to your good name, secure to them the only education that can keep them in God's favor to the end, an education cherished by the fostering influence of religion, rooted in the sacred soil of truth. Atonement for past mistakes is the single bitter remedy left for parents responsible by bad example

for the wickedness of their children. It is not yet too late. Begin at last to take up the practice of virtue in good earnest. God is wonderfully patient. In redoubled prayer make amends for old negligences. God is wonderfully open to a mother's prayer in behalf of a wayward child.

Our second class of mothers embraces such as are the crowning glory of Christian womanhood, alive to a sense of their duty, and blessed with sons and daughters, who reflect new lustre on their parents' name. God prosper them! God multiply them beyond the stars in the heavens, the sands on the seashore. These are the women, who forced a philosopher to say that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world, and that a man is what his mother makes him. No son of such a mother can, except by miracle, fall far short of the high ideal of virtue presented to his younger years. No daughter of such a mother can, when her turn to marry comes, quite forget the precautions her mother took to make home a pleasant memory, the abode of love, and holiness, and contentment. Such mothers are coöperating with the growth of God's Kingdom on earth, rearing future inhabitants for Heaven, and securing to themselves a fame more enduring than monuments, the benediction of generations that shall rise up and call them blessed. God prosper them! God multiply them beyond the stars in the heavens, the sands on the seashore!

And what message of cheer have we for those tearful mothers, angels in the household, and yet for some mysterious reason, known to God alone, disappointed in their children, doomed to years of patient suffering on account of a child's untoward conduct? With confidence we bid them often recall the comforting story of Monica and St. Augustine. St. Augustine was born at Tagaste in Africa about the year 354. He had a pagan for father; and for mother, a saint. The bad example of his father, like an evil genius, darkened with infamy and shame the first thirty-three years of his life. The remaining forty-three were a blessed period of peace and virtue purchased by the prayers and tears of his mother Monica. A year of idleness set at the end of his preliminary studies, was responsible for the lewd habits he carried with him to Carthage, whither he was sent at the age of sixteen to complete his education. After

three years in this stronghold of pride and debauchery, Augustine returned home to Tagaste, a confirmed Manichean; and he persevered in the revolting principles of this hellish sect for the next nine years. In the meantime his devout mother was storming Heaven with prayer, to win back her son from the ways of error. God saw fit to feed her hope with new disappointments. Once, however, in the course of conversation with a holy bishop, touching the mad career of her boy, she deserved to hear from her adviser's lips these comforting words, "Courage, good woman; it cannot be that a child of these tears should perish!" Tiring of home restraint, he soon set out anew for gay Carthage to open a school for rhetoric. Here he met with such success that he contemplated moving on Rome, the recognized centre of letters and civilization. A stay of a few months served to let him into the mean and dishonest methods resorted to by rivals in his profession, and he was heartily glad of an invitation proffered him to repair to Milan in the capacity of lecturer on rhetoric at the court of Valentinian. In the meantime his sorrowing and prayerful mother had performed the last sad rites for his father Patricius, rejoicing in the thought that he had made his peace with God in baptism a short interval before his death. This work of piety over, Monica at once set out in pursuit of her wayward son, and overtook him in Milan. The illustrious St. Ambrose was then bishop of the city, and held its inhabitants spellbound by his eloquence. Augustine was a frequent listener; and, urged by his fond mother, consented to visit the Saint whose learning he admired more than his holiness. One grace led to another. The work of conversion was steady, even if not rapid; and at the age of thirty-three Augustine received baptism at the hands of St. Ambrose. Monica's work was done. Her tears and her prayers had their full reward. She had snatched her husband from the horrors of a pagan's death, she had seen her son born again of water and the Holy Ghost, and now she made ready herself to die. Only a few days before her end, she had sat with her son on the river bank at Ostia, the port of departure from Italy to Africa, and with her hands in his, watched the Tiber hurrying down to the sea. The sweet tears that wet the cheeks of an exile among strangers, dimmed her eyes as she thought of their

pleasant home in Carthage, and of the sepulchre that enclosed the remains of a fond husband, from whom she was destined by a cruel fate to be separated in death. And yet, with all these memories fresh in her mind, with that longing inborn in the human breast to die at home, and sleep after death in the company of kins-people, another thought crowded all these thoughts out, and another prayer rushed to the lips of St. Monica in her dying hour. "Son, lay this body anywhere; be not concerned about that; only this I beg of you, that, whereso-ever you be, you make remembrance of me at the Lord's altar." Augustine embarked alone, and soon found himself in the streets of Carthage, a sadder, and a wiser, and a better man. Raised to the priesthood, he worked with all the mighty genius at his disposal to retrieve the follies of his youth and early manhood. He wrote, and he preached, and he prayed without ceasing. He filled the outside world with his wisdom, and drove heresy after heresy from the shores of his beloved country. Made bishop in 395, the fortieth of his age, he ruled the Church of Hippo for thirty-six years, and died gloriously in 430, at the advanced age of seventy-six. With this example of St. Augus-tine before her eyes, no mother need despair of a child's ulti-mate reform. Prayer is today of the same efficacy as it was fifteen hundred years ago, and that saying of the old bishop, who comforted Monica in her sorrow, remains forever true, "Courage, good woman; it cannot be that the child of these tears should perish."

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Ephesians 3; 13–12 *Gospel, St. Luke 14; 1–11*

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted."

—St. Luke 14, 11.

What a consummate teacher we have in the Lord Christ! How He fits the text to the occasion! How He adapts the lesson to the needs of His listeners! He is at a feast, and the guests of high and low degree are seating themselves in long rows at the table. "Take not the first place!" He is one in a gathering of Pharisees, demons of pride and hypocrisy. "He that exalteth himself, shall be humbled!" Of all the virtues, humility perhaps sat closest to His divine Heart. He was the Redeemer. Angels and men had lost themselves in a mad effort to unduly better their condition, and become like gods. Humility could remedy the disorder; and, with infinite wisdom the physician of souls fastened on humility as the panacea for human ills. "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart." This humility is an elusive thing. It is full of strange opposites. Holy writers are at pains to convey clear ideas of its real nature. Though the embodiment of truth, it is at first sight shockingly suggestive of falsehood. Though it counsels lowly thoughts, it fosters ambition. Obscurity is its chosen atmosphere, and yet history's humblest saints are robed in the glory of the lightning, and they have had the world at their feet. It is no easy task to judge from mere externals between genuine humility and counterfeit hypocrisy. Rags can cover proud hearts, and kingly splendor associate with humility. A dissatisfied sigh, and a seasonable word of self-reproach are oftener than not a bid for the praise of the unwary, and an artifice of pride.

With the saints we distinguish three degrees or measures of

humility. In its first beginnings humility is a settled and solemn conviction about our utter worthlessness, based on a studied knowledge of our hearts. It is a sort of self-knowledge, that renders us contemptible in our own eyes. The next step forward, theoretically speaking, is easy. It consists in experiencing emotions of gladness, when we are despised by others, in a longing desire to hide away from others and live unknown. From a practical point of view, this second degree is attended with colossal difficulties. It costs the saint many an inward pang to forego the delights incident to fame and good esteem. One may know himself a scoundrel, and inwardly pine for the honors of a hero. And, as if sanctioning this instinct of nature, the Creator has sealed and locked the base and the worthy secrets of my heart from the inquisitive eyes of my neighbor. Though in sober common-sense we ought to rejoice when others, like-minded with ourselves, rate us the vile things we honestly know ourselves to be, pride nevertheless blinds us to the truth, and goads us to fury, when men refuse us the sweet comfort of their praise and commendation. The third degree of humility, the crowning glory of this heavenly virtue, is a rooted readiness always to distinguish what we are by the mercy of God from what we are by the corruption of our own nature. St. Paul proves himself in secure possession of humility, when he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am!" I Cor. 15, 10. This last element saves humility from the shame attaching to faintheartedness and cowardice of spirit. The humble possess the land, and they are content with nothing short of the whole earth. St. Francis Xavier had vaster designs than any that ever entered the dreams of an Alexander or a Cæsar. St. Bernard emerged from his mountain-retreat to give counsel to pope and king, to muster the armies of the world against the infidel. And today men and women, consecrated in religion to the service of God, are carrying the faith across the seas, and are scattering our own land, every land under the sun, with monuments of their zeal and of their devotion to the cause of charity, and education, and the reign of Christ in men's hearts. Saints are men of ideals as lofty as the stars. High ideals are provocative of humility. They are a tonic for activity, a sure cure for laziness, and invariably bring out every

particle of good hidden away in a man's being. Humility has high ideals for father and mother. It is born of high ideals along with a consciousness of our own inferiority, as compared with their resplendent grandeur. The proud have low ideals, gathered from the morning paper and the modern novel. To these low ideals they have already attained, beyond them they cannot aspire, with them they are perfectly content, and mediocrity or worse, like a devastating blight, curses their entire lives.

But we have not yet sufficiently sung the praises of humility. It possesses three characteristics, that ought to commend it to every thoughtful and earnest soul. Humility is the truth, humility is a foretaste of Heaven, humility is a pledge or guarantee of the happiness of the elect. Humility is an abiding consciousness of God's exalted majesty and our own nothingness. Reason is emphatic in its declaration of God's infinite perfections. It is no less emphatic in its testimony to man's utter worthlessness. In the words of Holy Scripture, "We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought to do." St. Luke 17, 10. To God we owe all we have and possess. He who works for another, to whom he owes all, tries only to pay his debts. As a matter of fact, we can never quite cancel the debts we contracted with God. God out of pity accepts from us as a gift what is already His own. Profit means excess of gain over capital invested. Profit means money put in the merchant's pocket by the profitable commodity. We add nothing to God's capital. God is no richer, when we do our duty, than He was before we did our duty. We may by a stretch of language be called useful servants. We cannot be called profitable servants. In reason, therefore, humility is man's proper attitude, and reason is the truth. Pride is a lie, and a sin against not only God's law, but common-sense as well. Pride is a discordant note in the song of thanksgiving that rises in unbroken order from earth to the clouds. Humility is a foretaste of Heaven. "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Him whom thou hast sent, Jesus Christ." St. John 17, 3. From these inspired words it is evident that the practical knowledge or imitation of Jesus Christ is eternal life on earth. Humility is the most salient feature

in Christ's character. Everywhere in the gospels the humble Jesus insists on calling Himself the son of man. The Royal Prophet, impersonating the Messiah, says of himself, "I am a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." Psalms. 21, 7. Since, therefore, the imitation of Jesus is a Heaven on earth, and since Jesus singles out His lowliness for our imitation, humility must be the hidden secret of man's happiness here below. Reason again comes to the aid of Scripture. Heaven is peace, and peace is absence of restlessness and strife. Opposition breeds strife. The humble have no enemies to contend against. The humble, like the chaste, are beloved of God and men. The humble fix their hearts on sitting in the last and lowest place, and men are not wont to push and jostle their neighbors for a seat in the last row. The pushing is up front. There is always plenty of room at the back, and the world is not yet so full of saints that there is danger of crowding. Restlessness is born of dissatisfaction with our surroundings. The humble are entire strangers to dissatisfaction. Harsh words are a royal feast for them. Lowly offices happen along in the garb of gilt-edged blessings. When disappointed in their fondest hopes, when crossed in their choicest expectations, they are happy with the thought that things are at last coming their way, and that the burden of their prayers has reached God's ears at last. Humility is a pledge of Heaven. "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant. He humbled Himself; for which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name, which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth." Philip. 2, 7. St. Paul here ascribes to humility Christ's entrance into Heaven and all the glory He left behind Him on earth. Our title to this twofold honor, eternal rest in the bosom of God and the veneration of brothers in the faith, must be won by flawless holiness of life. Only saints can enter Heaven, and only saints are inscribed on the Church's roll of fame. Sanctity in the case of Christ was compassed by ignominy and humility. We must attain to sanctity by the same means. A thousand dark ways lead to hell. Heaven knows only one road, the royal road of the Cross. And, be-

cause the Cross breathes of malefactors, because it was a mode of death set apart by law for the lowest class of criminals, no man with a spark of pride in his bosom is going willingly to get under its weight. No man ambitious of a great name upon earth is going to tarry long in its shadow. Pride, therefore, must be stamped upon till it smoulders and dies. Ambition must be either headed in the right direction, or parted company with and forgotten. If humility is a pledge of Heaven, pride, the badge of demons, is a passport to hell; and pride has reaped many a harvest of lost souls since that dread hour in which one third of Heaven's angels fell, since that sad hour in which a race's parents threw away a race's splendid birthright.

The fires of hell and the myriad ills of earth are monuments proclaiming to the nations the enormity of pride's malice. Pride changed angels to devils. It swept like a pestilential wind through Eden, and what had been a paradise of delights was transformed into a land of exile, a valley of tears, a prison-house of sorrow. These angels before the fall were pure spirits, substances without a body, gifted with a knowledge and a beauty, that we strive in vain to imagine. Grace shone from the first like a star in their foreheads. The light that flowed with it into their minds was blinding, the strength it communicated to their hearts was a shield against every danger. Their knowledge measured a circle wider than our world, it ranged through fields of thought that we shall only somewhat know after entering Heaven. God had made them for company, and in His eyes they must have been fair to behold. They are our ideals of beauty; and, when artists lead them in upon a scene, they drape them with characteristics not borrowed from the earth; with wings, with flowing robes, with rounded features, rounded limbs, with motion partaking of all the ease and all the majesty of a summer evening's distant cloud on its way to the horizon. And these bright spirits were made to enjoy God's bounty forever; to fill the King's palace with music, and song, and laughter; to lead a life of holiday, with no night to cut short the day's round of amusement, with no vicissitude of time, or change, or season. And all this in surroundings that would beggar what the old poets sing of

our golden age, the times of Saturn, with harps and lutes a-playing, with new strains at every flutter of a wing, with the hum of countless perfumed voices. And no temptation, no straitening doubt, no anxiety about the morrow, no remorse for yesterday. There was no devil, no world, no flesh. All were friends. Envy had nothing to feed upon. Hatred, and anger, and sorrow were dead and asleep, till pride awoke them and renewed their life with the medicine of its own fell poison. God and they were alone in the universe; and in the magnificence of this vast solitude they awaited the time, when God would invite them even nearer, and confirm them in their blessedness forever. For God had made them, as He made everything else, for His praise, worship and service. And their worship must be free. Homage under restraint is no homage at all, and these angels had to win their places in Heaven by personal endeavor, by an unrestrained act of the will. Their fidelity had yet to be put to some test; and, without knowing the precise nature of that test, we know from Scripture that in the supreme ordeal one third of Heaven's angels failed. It is a common opinion that the Father chose to make trial of their loyalty by presenting to them for adoration the Lord Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, in the garb of humanity. Whatever the test, certain it is that Lucifer, the brightest, the most gifted, the leader of Heaven's hosts, raised that old war-cry against omnipotence: "I will not serve." Certain it is that the third part of the angels declared for open rebellion, and in their folly attempted to unseat the Almighty. Pride blinded them to all results, they risked their high prerogatives in unequal battle, and agreed to abide by the consequences of their rash act. And the consequences were not long coming. Can't you see that flash of lightning put on record by the Lord Christ in one line of St. Luke's gospel, "I saw Satan as lightning falling from Heaven!" St. Luke, 10, 18. It is hardly begun, when all is over. Can't you see Michael and his angels pursuing the rebels, and casting them headlong from the citadels of Heaven to the dungeon-pits of hell? Apoc. 12, 7.

Pride worked havoc in Heaven, and emptied seats in the august assembly of the angels. It likewise worked havoc on

the earth, and the work goes on. We are heirs robbed by pride of our title to Paradise, and we are paying the penalty of a crime centuries old. We are the sons and daughters of a tainted race, and by dint of exercise we have learned to forget past happiness and fondle present sorrow. To discover our forfeited title, we need only turn to the opening pages of the Bible and read the melancholy story of our parents' fall. The privileges they enjoyed are there set forth in detail, and we were to have been heirs to their high estate. The mines of the earth were theirs, to yield treasure without labor. The fields were to be scattered with plenty, ready the year round for harvest. The beasts we now denominate wild were to be tame and gentle, subservient to man's every wish. The seasons were to be tempered with sweetness, and lapse into unending spring. No weeds were to poison the meadow, or hinder the growing wheat. Mind was to be mistress of body, and passion lay dead. Ease blessed with the stamp of God's approval was to be our inheritance forever. There were to be no nights of fevered pain, no days of killing anxiety. Unburdened of earth's manifold ills, the children of men were to greet the sunrise with a song of praise on their lips, and watch his setting with another hymn of thanksgiving. God was to come down at frequent intervals, and walk the alley-ways of Eden in converse with men. There was to be no death. The body by a surpassing gift of God was to be as immortal as the soul, and destined to never become by disease, or age, or accident, an unfit dwelling place for its heavenly tenant. After his allotted time in this garden of pleasure, man the master and lord of creation was to be transplanted to the skies without the rude interference of death. There were to be no houses of mourning, no funeral processions, no crape on the door, no emblems of sorrow, no widows, no orphans, no cities of the dead with their mute and prayerful crosses pointing broken hearts Heavenwards. So planned the Eternal Father for His children! But pride spoiled His plans. And God comes down in anger. He is on an errand of justice. The calm wrath of omnipotence is unmistakable in His tones, and they smite the ears of hiding Adam and hiding Eve with terror. The fall of the angels is fresh as yesterday in His eternal memory, and the pride of man awakens

new regrets. The trial of the trembling culprits is short and sharp. Its minutes are spread on the opening pages of Genesis. Their punishment is swift. The terms of the commandment imposed upon them are plain, their violation of the same admits of no defense or excuse. God's executioner, in the person of an angel armed with a sword of flame, conducts them to Eden's entrance-gate, waves them forth, and stands threateningly to guard against their return. Down they go to the wilderness of wild beasts awaiting them for prey. The lion and the tiger slip their gentleness, and put on the ferocity that finds voice in the roar and growl of the jungle. Weeds are springing up on every side to choke earth's fertile growth. Venomous serpents are darting speckled fury and hissing poison through the grasses. The air is laden with imperceptible germs of disease. The four elements of nature enter into a conspiracy against the dethroned king of creation, and plot to burn, drown, kill and bury him. Many-headed passion awakes in his bosom, and he experiences a stinging shame, against which his rude girdle of leaves is small refuge. Poverty, hunger, thirst, toil, unrest, worry; pain, dangers by sea and dangers by land; all the myriad woes, with which we their children are only too well acquainted, follow Adam and Eve into their valley of tears, their land of exile from the comfort and presence of God. For full 900 years, we are told, the father of our race tasted the bitterness of his folly and did gruesome penance. For now nearly 6,000 years his posterity have been paying the penalty of their progenitors' crime, and the measure of God's justice is not yet filled. The punishment still goes on, and God's justice would forever remain unsatisfied, were it not for Redemption in Jesus.

Pride, therefore, is the root of all evil. It was at the bottom of the fall of the angels. It was at the bottom of the fall of our first parents, and it is responsible for most of the moral ruin that encompasses our universe today. Men and women are falling away from faith, from honesty, and piety, simply because their heads are swollen to such an extent by their progress in human knowledge, that they hold themselves quite independent of Almighty God, and impudently refuse allegiance and submission to God's Church. Unbelief is in the air, and

that disease is catching. "Stand firm, and hold the traditions which you have learned." 2 Thess. 2, 14. Be warned against the danger of these dread examples of the rebel-angels and the proud parents of mankind. Pride is poison. It is a foul smell in God's nostrils, an abomination in the eyes of men; and pride does faith more harm than any vice this earth knows. It is the crime of such misguided souls as today persecute Christ, and hinder the growth of His Kingdom. And our age is cursed with not a few such men. I speak not of those men of high intellectual attainments, men of fame and fortune, who are by slow degrees come to the denial of everything supernatural, everything religious, and reckon emancipation from the faith the greatest achievement of modern times. With men of this stamp the preacher of God's word has little to do. They are impervious to the light of divine truth, they have hardened their hearts against the softening influence of grace, and they stand in far greater need of good will than of instruction. They are not honest with themselves, and sincerity is the first step in the way to conversion. But even among ourselves, yea among Catholics, there are men and women slowly but surely drifting from the high standards of belief and morality bequeathed to them by worthy ancestors. These men and women are following in the footsteps of the Jewish priests who crucified Christ, they are marching towards apostasy; and unless they straightway call a halt, they must inevitably finish with the crime of God-murder in their own hearts and the hearts of others. Parents, who, to conciliate the esteem and friendship of unbelievers, sacrifice the faith of their fathers; parents, who, to secure for their sons and daughters entrance into society, do rude violence to the laws of the Church, and pay small heed to the advice of the Church's pastors, are guilty in God's sight of the self-same sin of pride, that made the priests of Israel responsible for Good Friday's fearful tragedy. Pride may be a trifle till it attacks God. Then it assumes all the horrid proportions of the sin of the angels, and some terrible punishment is not far distant. And next to hell itself God can visit crime with no heavier condemnation than with loss of faith and loss of His love. We had better, therefore, look to our hearts; and, if we find hiding

there any attachment strong enough to clash with God's interests, we had better root it out and cast it to the winds. If we find there any desire, on the accomplishment of which we set a higher value than we set on fidelity to the teachings of our faith, we are in supreme danger of disgrace here and eternal ruin hereafter. The first symptom of disease in the soul is that spirit of superiority and self-sufficiency, which prompts some to think that they are incomparably holier than their neighbors, and that they have no need of the Church, its guidance, its sacraments, its devotions. In our dealings with God humility is the only safe attitude. In His holy sight the best of us are nothing short of sinners, and to entertain any other opinion of ourselves is to harbor a lie.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Ephesians 4; 1–6 *Gospel, St. Matthew 22; 35–46*

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

—St. Matthew 22, 37.

This do, and thou shalt live. How like a God He teaches! All morality is summed up in these two commandments, Love God, and love thy neighbor. The best teacher is he who couches his doctrine in fewest words, without sacrificing clearness or directness. And the Lord Christ on this occasion is as brief as He is clear. There is no possible escape from His meaning, and not a word is superfluous. Love of God occupies first place in His sermon, and this very circumstance is a silent rebuke to the men and women of our own times, who stupidly think that man's moral duty in the realm of love begins and ends with kindness to his fellow-creatures. Humanitarianism, or misguided fondness for mankind, is a modern cult, a species of creature-worship; and it works untold harm, only because it distracts the heart from God, and fastens the affections exclusively on God's creatures. It is a perversion of reason, simply because it refuses to take faith into account. In accordance with the teachings of Christ we must love our neighbor too, even as the Samaritan loved the man fallen among robbers; and God must have first place in our thoughts, and our love for God must be all-absorbing. When men do deeds of charity for the purpose of destroying faith in young hearts, they are doing the work of the devil, and they can expect but the recompense of demons. And not a few such men ply their unholy trade in our own country. I pause not to discuss the conduct of that bigot, who in no far distant city invited newsboys to annual excursions on Friday, for the hellish delight

of seeing Catholics among them eat meat-sandwiches. I pause not to discuss the conduct of that wealthy woman, who supported sewing schools for poor girls for the sole purpose of poisoning their young minds against the Catholic and true interpretation of the Scriptures.

Love is a blind faculty, and follows whatever way reason leads it. No man ever yet loved a thing unless reason first stamped it as lovable and deserving of love. Beauty, truth and goodness are qualities that exercise a resistless force over our hearts. Wherever these qualities reside they need only become known, to take the heart captive. Beauty is the unique cause of love. Love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. God is infinite beauty; and, if we could only see Him as He is, we should be no longer free to love or hate Him. Like the elect in Heaven, love would be our one employment. We enjoy this cursed freedom to love or hate God, because we cannot see Him as He is, because we see Him darkly, in the glass held up by faith and philosophy. And the brighter we keep this glass by reflection on the attributes of God, the more impossible shall we make it for ourselves to go wrong. In Heaven love of God is the one possible attitude. Because they see God as He is, see Him face to face, the elect are capable of love alone. They enjoy no freedom in the matter, and merit is at an end.

To make this necessity our own, to slip into love's sweet bondage, we must here on earth take a nearer view of God's infinite perfections. His beauty is written large across the open book of creation, and we must study its pages with enthusiasm. God is central sun of our universe. Created perfections, like the gladiator's might, the judge's wisdom, the virgin's modesty, are but rays let down to warm our earth with the warmth of God's own love. Every creature, whether it be a pretty face, a shapely figure, a deed of prowess or an act of heroism, is but an image of some perfection in God. God is the architect, the world of beauty at our feet is the house He built; and the house always derives its being from the mind of the architect. God's beauty is infinite, and a million worlds could never adequately set forth His beauty. Like ourselves, when constrained by some large idea to employ a multiplicity of words, God uses

words or creatures without number to advertise us of His perfections. Begin to count them, and you would never finish. There are the sunrise and the sunset, the moonlight and the clouds. There is the orderly march of the seasons, the soft air of spring, the golden radiance of summer, red ripe autumn, and winter's silvery cold. There are the mountains and forests, the rivers and seas. There are the arts, eloquence, poetry, painting; with angels from the wizard hand of Angelico; music, that voice from spirit-land, with all its power to soothe and rouse, able to make men forget death in the shock of battle, able to lead an annoying babe to the realms of peaceful sleep. There are all the charms of life's varying stages, the simplicity of childhood, the activity of youth, the steadfastness of men and women, the quiet content of old age. There are the faces of friends we love, the depth of their affection, betrayed in a squeeze of the hand, a tremor of the voice; a mother's double kiss at parting with her son; a father's devotedness, the hard lines of toil in his hands, symbols of his love for his children. All these perfections are resident in God. Otherwise they could never have place in the world. Effects preëxist in their causes. They are the effects, God is their cause. Nobody gives but what he first possesses. God scatters the world with these perfections. Therefore, He first possesses them. Here in good sooth we have an object worthy of our love, the one object able to satisfy our large capacity for love. What folly then to cleave to creatures! And every sin we do is just such folly. Sin means the abandonment of God for creatures, the rejection of God and God's law for the gratification derivable from money, glory or pleasure.

Beauty is the unique cause of love. Love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. God is an accumulation of amiable characteristics. God is loveliness itself, and as such He can never be adequately loved by angels or men. And yet He insists on His rights in this matter. He wants our love for Him to set in motion every energy at our disposal. He wants our heart, and the whole of it. He wants our soul, and the whole of it. He wants our mind, and the whole of it. And the man who refuses Him a corner of his heart, a breath of his soul, a thought of his mind, is in the very instant of his refusal a fool,

a scoundrel and a thief. He is a fool, because he is at odds with right reason. He is a scoundrel, because he insults omnipotence. He is a thief, because he robs God of glory God meant to have from the beginning.

God wants our heart, and the whole of it. He is willing to let a mother entertain tender feelings for her child. He is willing to let a friend entertain tender feelings for a friend. But He forbids the mother and the friend to allow any guest to cross the threshold of their hearts, unless that guest is sealed in some way with the mark of God. In other words, no guest must enter the sacred precincts of a man's heart unattended. Admittance must be sternly refused whatever guest, unless God stands at his side and introduces him. Charity, then, resolves itself into loving God for Himself, and others for God's sweet sake. Hence St. Ignatius' rule for holiness. "To strip self of all love for creatures, fusing love for them into love for their Creator, loving Him in all creatures, and them all in Him, according to His most holy and divine will."

God wants the whole of our soul, the whole of that unseen something within us, which is the root and source of our life. He wants us to live entirely for Him. He wants us every time we raise a hand or put a foot forward to raise the hand and move the foot with the express purpose of adding our mite to His glory. If we ever feel that some deed we contemplate cannot be turned to God's account, we had better leave the deed undone. We cannot complain that God leaves us without opportunities to love Him with our whole soul. A man's intention colors all his activity. This intention can change dross into gold. It can, by investing our work with the halo of God's presence, make the most trivial domestic occupation, like sweeping, sewing, talking, a something as sublime in God's eyes as the death of a martyr, the repentance of a dying sinner. The religious mechanic carries thought of God with him to the workshop. The religious work-girl, her young heart full of God, turns work into prayer; and all day long at desk or counter pays the Supreme Being the homage which is His due. The pen of the religious poet is tipped with thoughts of God, and he cannot keep God out of his lines. In the golden poetry of St. Paul, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever

else you do, do all to the glory of God." I Cor. 10, 31. And this is the secret of loving God with one's whole soul.

God wants our mind, and the whole of it. He wants us to think continually and unremittingly of Him. He wants to occupy as prominent a place in our thoughts as the cross occupies on the church-top. We are never out of His mind. He wants to be never out of ours. If we once bow Him out of this home of His, there is danger of His never returning. He must sit like a king in our minds, and the thousand thoughts that daily journey through the busy workshop of our brain, must be able to pass muster before this king, and arouse in Him as they pass no displeasure, no wrath, no anger. We must, therefore, arise with God in the morning, carry Him about in our bosom all day long, and yield to sleep with the features of His sweet face imprinted as a last image on our tired fancies. Faithful devotedness to the practice of frequently recalling God's presence can secure for us this choicest of blessings, and enable us to really and truly love God with our whole mind.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, 1 Corinthians 1; 4–9 *Gospel, St. Matthew 9; 1–8*

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee."
—St. Matthew 9, 2.

Coming events cast their shadows before. Christ was minded to institute the sacrament of Penance after His Resurrection. And in today's gospel, long in advance of the event, He exercises in person the power He means to confer at a later date on His apostles and their successors. He is paving the way for faith in this miracle of mercy. He is weeding out His followers. There are some unbelievers in His company, men willing to make certain concessions to faith, without wholly surrendering themselves to its guidance. Christ wants no traitors in His camp, and He wants to give these doubters a chance to declare openly for or against the truth. As usual, His enemies enter a protest, they raise their voices in blatant denial. "The Scribes said, He blasphemeth." His friends, represented by the multitude, bow their heads to the truth, and bend proud reason to the homage of belief. "The multitude glorified God, that gave such power to men." And we have to choose between the Scribes and the multitude. We have made our choice. We are Catholics. We are proud to rank with the God-fearing followers of Christ, Peter and his fellow-apostles at our head, and we have nothing but sincere pity for the men and the women, our neighbors, who standing with the Scribes obstinately refuse to recognize the Sacrament of Penance, or confession, as a divine institution. We Catholics, therefore, believe that the priest in the confessional is vested with all the tremendous authority of God Himself over sin. We believe that he is empowered to declare forgiven in God's name any sin of whatever size, any crime of whatever magnitude, from murder to distractions at prayer. No offense against God is outside of his jurisdiction; and the sinner, after the priest pronounces pardon,

can feel absolutely certain that he is as clean of sin as if God Himself descended in person from Heaven and declared him free.

This is the faith of Our Holy Mother the Church, and her faith is founded on the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, contained in the 20th chapter of St. John's gospel. After His Resurrection from the dead, He appeared to His apostles and said, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you." Then He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

We Catholics are all agreed about the necessity of confession, we are all familiar with its wealth of peace and pardon; and this morning's gospel suggests a few words about its parts. These parts are four, examination of conscience, contrition, confession, penance. We kneel before the priest to tell our sins, all our sins; and, to be able to tell our sins, we must first know them. Hence, before entering the confessional, we make a study of our hearts, and recall the sins we committed since our last confession. Every single mortal sin we remember must be told. Otherwise the confession will be a sacrilege, no confession at all, and no sin will be forgiven. Sometimes we forget our sins. But mortal sins are so wicked that we can hardly forget them. If venial sins are forgotten, no matter. If some mortal sins are forgotten through no fault of our own, they are in virtue of universal contrition forgiven with the others. If we afterwards remember them, we must tell them in our next confession. Sins may be committed in thought, word or deed; and, no matter how committed, must be told in confession. No general accusation will be sufficient. We must tell each mortal sin separately, and we must tell as exactly as we can the number of times we committed each mortal sin, along with aggravating circumstances. In this matter of examination of conscience there must be no undue worry or excitement. God does not want confession to be a butcher-shop or a place of torment and agony. He wants us quietly to do the best we can, and honestly accuse ourselves of whatever we remember having done wrong since our last confession.

After the examination of conscience, our next duty is to

excite ourselves to contrition. When we reflect that God forgives no sin without this contrition, we can understand its importance. Contrition is sorrow and hatred for sin, with a firm resolution of amendment. We are sorry for our sins, when remembrance of them awakens within us emotions of sadness, grief and pain. We hate our sins, when remembrance of them awakens within us emotions of displeasure. Our sorrow and hatred for sin, if genuine and true, must make us resolve or determine with ourselves never again to be guilty of the thoughts, words and deeds, that produce within us this sorrow and hatred. This sorrow and hatred for sin must have certain qualities; and, when exciting ourselves to contrition, we must keep these qualities in mind. Our sorrow must be real, it must be actual, it must be supernatural and it must be universal. It must be real, that is to say, it must exist in the heart, and not consist in mere outward signs, like tears and sadness of countenance. It must be actual, not a feeling that we had months before confession, nor a feeling we are going to have months afterwards, but a present sorrow, perceptible here and now. Our sorrow must likewise be supernatural. Merely natural sorrow is of no worth in God's sight. If a man is sorry for drunkenness or any other sin, simply because of the disgrace he suffered, the money he wasted, or the good health he lost, his sorrow is purely natural, and of no account for confession. He must be sorry in the main because of the wrong he has done God. Contrition, therefore, is supernatural, when it has God for motive, and we again distinguish two kinds of supernatural contrition. One is called perfect; the other, imperfect. Our contrition is perfect, or of the highest kind possible, when we are sorry for having offended God on account of His infinite perfections, or because He is infinitely good in Himself. Our contrition is imperfect, of a lower order, but high enough, if coupled with confession, when we are sorry for having offended God, not because He is infinitely good in Himself, but because He is infinitely good to us, because by our sins we have lost Heaven and deserved hell. Of these two kinds of contrition perfect is, of course, the better, and more desirable; and we should always endeavor to excite it within our hearts. God is a Being of infinite purity,

of perfections without limit; and the insult offered to such a being by sin ought to fill us with sadness, even if there were no Heaven, no hell. However, we are so selfish that oftentimes no motive short of our own advantage can move us to repentance. Men somehow or other find it easier to be sorry for their sins on account of the hell opening before them, and threatening to swallow them up; and God is satisfied with this imperfect contrition, when the other parts of confession are present. Our contrition must, finally, be universal. This quality is well worth remembering. In confession either all our mortal sins are forgiven at once, or none at all. If after confession one mortal sin remains unforgiven, all are unforgiven. We cannot love one mortal sin, and expect to have the others, which we thoroughly hate, pardoned. If, therefore, a man in confession is sorry for every sin but drunkenness or impurity, God will refuse to pardon even the sins for which he is sorry. If he omits, even through no fault of his own, a single mortal sin, and his sorrow in no way touches that sin, his confession is likewise useless. But there is a way out of the difficulty, and the way is this. We ought always in our act of contrition strive to feel sorry for all our sins together, inasmuch as they are offenses against God, not because they are sins of this or that particular kind. Then we can feel sure that our sorrow is universal, and touches even sins we have through no fault of our own forgotten to tell. Our sorrow, therefore, to deserve God's notice and approval, must be real, not pretended or put on; it must be actual, alive and present; it must be supernatural, with God for motive; it must be universal and cover our every mortal sin.

But contrition to be true must have another and a very important element, one, too, sometimes lost sight of; and that element is a firm purpose of amendment. This firm purpose of amendment is a determination never again to fall into mortal sin of any kind. No vague, uncertain, general resolution will do. We must descend to particulars. We must promise God to put into effect all the suggestions the priest makes, to keep away from this or that companion, who has hitherto led us into sin, to stay far from the places and amusements that we cannot without blame frequent. We know these companions,

these places, and these amusements; and we know how impossible it is for us to remain good long, unless we avoid them; and away down in the bottom of our hearts there is a voice telling us that we are insincere and dishonest with God, if we promise reform without fully making up our minds to break away from these companions, these places, these amusements.

Confession is the telling of our sins to a duly authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness. It is the third part of the Sacrament of Penance, and an essential requisite for the forgiveness of any sin committed after Baptism. It is often no easy task. It is disagreeable, it is mortifying, it is humiliating, it is annoying, it fills one with shame. But no matter, it has to be done. God has said it; and God's word stands. The man who commits one mortal sin after Baptism, cannot enter the Heaven prepared by God for His friends, unless he tells the priest that sin and obtains absolution. The Catholic Church, the pillar and ground of truth, the visible representative of God on earth, is authority for this statement; and we Catholic sons of God and children of the true faith accept the statement with all its responsibilities, with all its disagreeable consequences.

Near the end of confession, just before the priest raises his hand to give absolution, he imposes a penance on the penitent. The performance of this penance is called satisfaction, and is the fourth part of the sacrament. The penance itself is usually a prayer or some other act of piety, and it must be performed immediately and with exactitude. Should a person forget or even neglect to perform his penance, the confession would be all right, though the temporal punishment due his sins would still remain to be expiated in this life or in Purgatory. The Church obliges the priest to impose penances large or small, according to the nature of the sins told in confession. The Church in this matter follows the wishes of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as she understands them in Holy Scripture. It is evident from Scripture that God has two ways of punishing sin. One punishment, eternal, lasts forever, and means hell. The other, temporal, lasts for only a certain definite period of time, and consists of the various afflictions we impose on ourselves, or receive at the hands of God during life. If death finds us with

any portion of this debt uncancelled, we are detained in Purgatory till the last farthing is paid. The priest with the authority and in the name of the Church substitutes the penance for whatever temporal punishment may be due the sins he forgives in confession. It is, therefore, an article of our faith that, even after the guilt of mortal sin is remitted and blotted out, the sinner still owes God satisfaction, and must undergo a certain amount of pain for the wrong he has done. The priest's absolution frees him from all the guilt of mortal sin, and secures his escape from hell. The penance imposed by the priest frees him from this temporal punishment, and secures his escape from Purgatory. God could have been satisfied with confession only, and could have agreed to cancel our sins and their entire punishment without any penance at all. But we know from our Bible that He chose this other way, and now, even after confession, we owe God part payment for our offenses, and must, besides confessing our sins, perform whatever penance the priest gives us to perform.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Ephesians 4; 23–28 *Gospel, St. Matthew 22; 1–14*

"Bind his hands and feet and cast him into the exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen."

—St. Matthew 22, 13.

Beginning with the end of the story, we encounter a saying of Scripture hard to interpret, and interpreted to their own perdition by many of our separated brethren. "Many are called, but few are chosen." The Calvinists or strict Presbyterians make these words mean that God has chosen a certain fixed number for unending happiness, without any merit of their own; and has condemned the rest of mankind to perdition, no matter what efforts they make to keep out of hell. This is heresy, this is the doctrine of lazy cowards; a doctrine that saps all spiritual vigor, and in the event renders despair or presumption inevitable. But the Catholic view of this text, the view approved by God's Church, is free from every objectionable consequence. It means, according to us, that God gives to all without a single exception abundant grace and abundant opportunity to embrace the gift of faith. Many are called, all are called. Few, however, are chosen. Few, in other words, take advantage of the means God puts at their disposal, few coöperate with God's grace, few do themselves the violence the Kingdom of Heaven suffers. But every soul lost has itself and its own inactivity to blame for its folly. Every man lost walks down to hell with his eyes wide open, with the cool, unclouded consciousness of choosing his own destiny for eternal weal or eternal woe. This is the only view of the Lord Christ's saying able to commend itself to right reason. This is the only view able to secure the reign of righteousness in the universe. This is the only view adopted by men brave enough to

know and acknowledge their duty, and fight sin, and overcome self.

Without at all attempting to fathom the abyss of God's wisdom, without meaning to be unduly inquisitive, we venture to think that this morning's parable of the marriage-feast clearly sets forth the economy of salvation, God's attitude towards three classes of men. The marriage-feast to which God invites mankind is membership in the true Church of Christ. Christ is the bridegroom; His Church is His spouse. Heretics, so-called Christians of modern times, willing to make certain concessions to faith, without wholly surrendering themselves to its guidance, constitute our first class. They neglect God's call, and go their several ways; one to his farm, another to his merchandise, all too much engrossed with worldly affairs to give religion the homage of a single serious thought. Infidels, heathens and pagans, living and dying outside the light of the Gospel, seated in the darkness of sin, laying hands on God's servants, putting them to death, constitute our second class. These add injury to insult and meet the loving invitation of God with violence and murder. And God waxes angry at their conduct, and God sends an army to destroy them and their cities. Catholics constitute the third class. These are they who with a good heart hear the word of God and keep it. Summoned by the servants of the King from every walk in life, from the highways and the byways of the world, they are ranged round the festive board, partakers of what cheer the Father dispenses to His wedded Son's guests. In this vast throng the good and bad commingle, saints and sinners find their way into the Church of God. Saints are conspicuous in their wedding garments of grace and innocence. Sinners, typified in the unfortunate guest cast into the exterior darkness, are without this badge of the elect, and soon or late, in life or death, lose their seats at the table and incur the sad fate of heretics and infidels.

And again those agonizing words of fearful prophecy come back to my ears: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The world is before us, and we are invited to scrutinize its inhabitants in the light of today's gospel, with a view to their chances of salvation. It is a melancholy task, beset on every

side with unpleasantly grim warnings. On competent authority we venture to say that mankind at present numbers 1,500,000,000 souls. Of these in round figures some 1,000,000,000 are outside the pale of Christianity. The other 500,000,000 are believers in Christ, and break up into Catholics, schismatics and heretics. Roughly, the Catholics are 250,000,000, the schismatics are 100,000,000 and the heretics or Protestants are 150,000,000. Out of the Church there is no salvation, is a doctrine for which we Catholics contend; and, explain the dogma as you will, stretch its terms to the uttermost, you will be able to derive from it small comfort and encouragement for schismatics and heretics. They are out of the ark of salvation, and the waters of iniquity are roaring and rising to engulf them. They are walking ways forbidden by the Christ-appointed teacher of men. They are struggling against fearful odds, embarked in a war almost sure to end in disaster, doing battle against demons without a single one of the helps to victory proffered by the Church to her children in the sacraments, and denominated practically indispensable by the authority of God Himself. Everybody saved belongs to the Catholic Church, if not to its body, at least to its soul; and in this sense out of the Church there is no salvation. It is no breach of Christian charity to preach from the housetops and cry aloud that in the ordinary course of events people who die outside of the body of the Catholic Church are lost. Membership in the soul without membership in the body is an altogether extraordinary process, and yet not beyond the power of God. To encourage religious indifferentism would be the height of unkindness. It could have but one effect, the lulling of the nations into a sleep infallibly sure to close with spiritual death. Charity alone impels me to sound the note of warning, and, rude though the awakening be, to arouse the world of schismatics and heretics to their danger. I have small hope for the men and women who live and die outside of the fold of Christ's one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church; and I should count myself a scoundrel, if I ever by word or deed encouraged anybody to persevere in heresy.

Briefly, these are a heretic's chances for salvation. Children, who after valid Baptism die before they reach the age

of reason, are candidates for Heaven. Men and women validly baptized can, ordinarily speaking, win Heaven only at the expense of flawless innocence, uninterrupted and lifelong freedom from serious sin in thought, word and deed. God has provided for such of them as sin an extraordinary means in the shape of perfect contrition; but, as if fearful of men's ability to acquit themselves of this sublime act, He saw fit to establish for His children the Sacrament of Penance, wherein imperfect contrition, or sorrow of a lower and easier order, procures forgiveness. Protestants have made confession impossible for themselves. Now, to imagine that multitudes of Protestants can persevere for long periods of years without a single mortal sin, is altogether against experience, and quite at odds with our knowledge of human nature. Catholics innumerable, with all the myriad helps to holiness put at their disposal in the Sacraments and the Church's devotions, acknowledge it an impossible task; and we are all made of the one clay, beset with the same passions, and dragged down by the same weight. In fact, it is an article of our Faith that no man, Catholic, Protestant or heathen, can long persevere in holiness without a particular and very special grace of God; and we are nowhere taught that God does such favors exclusively to people outside of His true Church. Neither will vincible ignorance of the true Church save them. The kind of ignorance that alone relieves of responsibility is invincible, and it is always accompanied by an overwhelming desire and untiring effort to reach the truth. There may be some Protestants whose ignorance is of this invincible stamp, and God alone knows whether they are few or many. And, even where ignorance of the true Church is invincible, it at most excuses men from the single sin of heresy, and is far from palliating or condoning whatever other sins they consciously and knowingly commit. This ignorance will not secure to them the advantages of Baptism, or confession, or of any of the other Sacraments. Heresy is not the only sin that has hell for wages, and heretics invincibly ignorant of the truth, have small cause for congratulation in the thought, that they will never be condemned to hell on account of their heresy. Our theologians teach that God would work a miracle rather than let a single soul, de-

serving the gift of faith by uniform holiness of life, die outside of the Catholic Church. St. Thomas teaches that, to save a savage reared in the centre of Africa and of absolute blamelessness, God would send an angel down to instruct him in the truth. But God is held to no such kindness, no such extraordinary mark of favor, in the case of an enemy, a heathen or heretic who by one mortal sin has forfeited God's friendship. Therefore, without fear or favor, let us stand up for the truth. With a silent prayer that my knowledge may be wrong, and that God in His mysterious ways may have some method of saving heretics hidden from me, I only say what I do know, when I solemnly declare that many heretics are in the exact condition of the men, who in today's gospel went to their farm and their merchandise, absented themselves from the marriage-feast, and they can have no part with Christ.

But what of the infidel, the heathen and the pagan, who constitute our second class? Well, their case is even more hopeless. Denied the benefit of Baptism, dead to moral sense, sunk in a cesspool of iniquity the accumulation of ages, worshipping immorality as a virtue, they are driven like dumb cattle to hell, and suffer even a worse fate than the animals they stupidly adore. About their ignorance we need merely remark that the Gospel has been sufficiently promulgated, and that God stands ready to work the miracle, hinted at by St. Thomas in the case of such as are sincerely holy. No more than in the case of heretics will it atone for the crimes they daily commit in open rebellion against the loud clamor of conscience. God pity them! God pity them, and hasten their deliverance from the bondage of sin. St. Paul in his letter to the Romans applies to the apostles and the preachers of God's word these lines of the Psalmist, "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth: and their words unto the end of the world." Ps. 18, 5; Rom. 10, 18. And missionaries are toiling among them; men and women, on fire with zeal for the glory of God, are following in the tracks of discovery, to make the advent of religion simultaneous with the coming of civilization into their midst. Besides being out of the true Church and beyond the reach of the Sacraments and its other helps to salvation, these infidels, heathens and pagans have no faith

in Christ. And, with the inspired word of God for authority, "There is no other name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." A. A. 4, 12. These persecute the name of Christ; and, like the men in our parable, who met the King's invitation with violence and murder, they provoke God's anger and hasten their own destruction.

Catholics are figured forth in the guests at the feast. Remark that they are a motley crew; some good, others bad; some with the wedding garment of grace on their shoulders, others without the needed covering. Our Church is an assembly of saints and sinners. Membership in it is not confined exclusively to the elect. In Heaven it will be purged clean of the unworthy. But here on earth the large mercy of God keeps its gates wide open for saint and sinner alike. His ways are wonderful ways, and all His conduct with men is strange. Some Catholics carry the white robe of their baptismal innocence to the grave without a stain. Others in the course of a wild youth and a wilder manhood drag it in the mire for years, only to wash it clean later in the saving waters of Penance, and go out to meet their Judge with salvation snatched from loss. Good Friday found us grouped together on Calvary in the persons of Mary, and John, and Magdalene, and the robber at the Lord Christ's right. His Virgin Mother, the disciple He loved, Magdalene, His mercy's conquest and the good thief, His mercy's crown, have their counterparts scattered up and down the wide extent of God's Church. Eyes with some of the streaming fondness of Mary's are looking upward from the foot of the Cross. Hearts are beating in the world outside, as proud of brotherhood with Christ as the virgin John was of sonship with Mary. And the repentant the world over, close up to shrinking Magdalene, in full view of the martyred robber, are cancelling old debts with the double homage of courage and shame. There are other Josephs, like him of Arimathea, who beg the body of Jesus, who wrap Him in the sepulchre of a heart as tightly sealed against worldliness as if hewed in stone, a heart wherein never yet any man or any rival love had lain. The wedding-garment in the parable is sanctifying grace, easily procurable in the Sacraments. Each successive sin robs us of this sacred possession, but the loss is not without remedy. To renew ownership, we

need only go show ourselves to the priest, and make humble confession of our crimes. Thus today's enemy can become tomorrow's friend; and, as long as we remain in close communion with the Church of the Sacraments, we can never stray far from God's friendship and love. He is always within easy call, and His arms are outstretched to welcome the repentant prodigal home. His searching eye is never off the guests, and by the voice of His preachers He warns those naked of grace in no uncertain tones. Death is the hour when He sweeps into the feast, to solemnly condemn to exterior darkness whatever souls persevere to the end in their nakedness, and persistently refuse to avail themselves of the priest's forgiving power. In the light of these facts, what are a Catholic's chances for salvation? Well, they are of the best; and only the supremest sort of folly can defeat them of accomplishment. God in His mercy makes salvation comparatively easy for Catholics, and this very circumstance quite persuades me to think that by far the greater number of Catholics are saved. They are members of His true Church, they do His word the homage of full belief, they submit to the galling yoke of His hard and fast code of morality, and they are in serious earnest about their Father's business. For large return, this indulgent Father, who will not be outdone in generosity, puts within easy reach helps denied the heathen and the heretic. In fact, the parable on which we are at present engaged, forbids any other line of thought. In that vast concourse of guests at the feast, the King after close inspection discovers only a single man without the wedding-garment, and with his removal the merriment goes on, the rest are secure in their enjoyment of Heaven. And yet, in the words of St. Paul, we must work out our salvation in fear and trembling. Philipp. 2, 12. With the awful fate of that brother forever before our eyes, we must take measures to keep always in God's friendship, to be ever ready for inspection; and to this end nothing can better serve than an occasional glimpse at the torments of the wicked, than a sober study of sin's wages, of what it costs to persevere in wickedness and die in God's displeasure.

Hell is sin's wages. In God's eternal ideas of right and wrong no smaller punishment than an eternal hell squares with the malice of mortal sin, and God's ideas are right. And what

is this hell? Well, hell is God's prison-house of justice. Heaven is the home God prepares for them that love Him. This present life is the theatre of God's mercy, where God in patience submits to the insults and affronts of His enemies, where God in kindness deals roughly with His friends. Were there no Heaven, no place where saints could wear the crowns they win, where bleeding virtue got its full reward, God would lose His claims to men's respect. Were there no Heaven, God would be untruthful, unfair, unwise, unholy. But the question has another aspect. Were there no hell, no place where sinners must pay to the last farthing the penalty of their crimes, God would likewise be untruthful, unfair, unwise, unholy. Hell is a word of common occurrence in Holy Scripture, and Holy Scripture is a record of God's utterances to men. Divine justice in this life lets off culprits rather lightly; and, unless divine justice in the next life strikes a balance between holiness and wickedness, wrong must forever triumph over right, vice over virtue. Believe me, the wicked suffer no hell on earth. At a certain stage they are proof against remorse. The most consummate villains history knows never saw the inside of a prison, and today murderers, adulterers, thieves, are walking the streets unmolested, are receiving the applause of their fellow-men, and enjoying all the consideration due respectable citizens. God is a lawmaker, and He wants his laws kept. The lawmaker, who fails to enforce his laws with due sanction, has only himself to blame, if his laws are treated with contempt and disrespect. The severest penalty at God's disposal is an eternity of pain in the fires of hell; and, if God neglected to punish violations of His law with this extreme penalty, He would be responsible for men's crimes. All normal minds believe in the reality of hell. Some men find it profitable to hire halls and for a moderate fee raise doubts in the minds of men, who on account of their misdeeds are sore afraid of hell, and would give half their fortune, if somebody stronger than Almighty God quenched the fires of hell and locked its gates forever. But the fires of hell are not going to be quenched, an omnipotent and truthful God has said it; and the gates of hell are not going to be locked, till the last enemy of God gets inside. Belief in the reality of hell, like belief in God's own ex-

istence, is an instinct of nature, and no amount of bad philosophy can prove such beliefs, such instincts false. But we are Catholics, believers, and Scripture with us is of infinitely more weight than even philosophy. To take a few passages at random, I find Scripture discoursing thus of hell. Job in his 10th chapter describes hell as a "land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." Isaias in his 30th chapter speaks thus of hell, "The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone kindling it." St. John in the 14th, 16th and 20th chapters of his Apocalypse has these expressions, "The wicked shall be tormented with fire and brimstone,—shall be cast alive into the pool of fire burning with brimstone. And the smoke of their torments shall ascend forever and ever. They gnawed their tongues for pain, neither have they rest day or night." In the 13th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ calls hell, a "furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In today's gospel it is "the exterior darkness where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Matthew, 22, 13. In the 25th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel Christ Jesus, on the eve of His Passion, closes His three years of teaching with these memorable and terrifying words, the formulary of condemnation to be heard again from His lips on the day of the Last Judgment. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

Therefore, according to God, its architect, hell is a pool of fire burning with brimstone, and the breath of God's anger keeps it hot. Its flames are made of real fire, different from the kind that eats up buildings and people in a conflagration only in this that it burns deeper and feeds on the very substance of the soul. Fire is fire; and, when God says that hell is a pool of fire, He means what He says. He knows too well the value and force of words to make any mistake. Brimstone is sulphur, the material used in the manufacture of matches; and, when God says that hell-fire gathers strength from torrents of brimstone, He is not exaggerating its fierceness. He is communicating plain facts to simple minds. The light

from the fires of hell is so lurid, so choked with clouds of smoke, that it can be called darkness. For hell is a "land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." And in these shadows catch glimpses of the men and women, old and young, tossing uneasily on their beds of pain. The damned are all fire. They are transformed into human shapes with fire penetrating every particle of their members. Their eyes are balls of fire, their tongues are lumps of fire. They walk in fire, they swim in fire, they eat fire, they drink fire, and their throats, their very entrails, are never without the stinging pain of fire, the awful sensation of being continually smothered without ever dying. And these eyes were once the eyes of fair women and famous men, whose names were on every lip. Their owners held court in society circles, and were worshipped for their beauty and their fame by crowds of admirers. They were black eyes, or blue eyes, or hazel eyes; and the newspapers of their time were full of the conquests they made among men, they and the painted cheeks and the wealth of golden or raven hair that crowned them. But the owners of these eyes were men and women of sin. They laughed through life. They ate, drank, and made merry. And once, yea hundreds of times, they outraged God's laws. They heard the small voice of conscience making clamor against their conduct. But they heeded it not. Life belonged to them, and health, and beauty, and honor; and they were determined to taste every sweet life knew, God's law notwithstanding. And they had their way. God interfered by no miracle to cut short their mad career. God need never be in a hurry to punish His enemies. He has the endless ages of eternity at His disposal, and years of waiting are like parts of minutes. God need never feel anxious about at last overtaking His enemies. Men and women die. They are born to die. And the dead, even before their bodies grow cold, report at the foot of God's throne for final sentence of the Sovereign Judge. And so these sinners had their way. No lightning ever struck them down in their pleasures. It struck people in their vicinity; but somehow or other it always passed them by. No invisible hand in the night choked them as they slept. Friends of theirs died suddenly, but they were

themselves spared that catastrophe. And oh the time they had! Their eyes were never wet with tears. Tears belong to the poor and wretched in this life, not to the rich and the gay. Their cheeks were never pale with sorrow. God reserves sorrow for His friends in this life. He can be good to them afterwards. In Heaven He can dry their tears and put roses in their cheeks. He cannot be good to His enemies afterwards. And so he blesses them in this life with health, wealth, and honor, beauty, happiness and fame. And in the next life, in hell? Well, they made deliberate choice of their fate. They agreed to the bargain. Good and evil were set before them, and they chose evil. For a few years of intense pleasure on earth they sacrificed God and Heaven; and, daring God to do His worst, they now descend into an eternity of pain.

Their eyes black, blue and hazel, are red with tears of fire. Their cheeks have lost the rose and are become the food of flame and worms. Hell's darkness succeeds to the glory of the ball-room, the drawing-room, the theatre. The odor of perfumed voices, the smell of flowers breathing their riches from costly vases, give place in hell to the smell of pitch, brimstone, roasted flesh, the sores and the ulcers of sin. The lascivious music floating from trained minstrels, hidden behind splendid curtains, is hushed forever, to make room for the shouts of exulting demons, blasphemies of the damned, their shrieks, their groans, their curses. Their delicately soft hands no longer squeeze the throbbing hands of partners in the dance. Their partners are demons or damned companions, and their hands are burning. The purple and silk they wore are become garments of fire. The couches of down, on which they rested their tired limbs after nights of riot and debauchery, are become beds of flame. But why linger on these painful scenes? You know without being told anew the sad history of a single day in hell. You know without being told anew who and what manner of men and women are crowded into this prison-house of torment. The rich and the voluptuous are not alone in their agony. Mothers, who toiled and fretted all the days of their life, are there to pay the penalty for bad example shown their children, for neglected prayers, for Sundays spent with-

out Mass, for hidden excesses at home. Young men and young women are there for sinful attachments formed, for immodesties done in secret, for sins a foolish shame prevented them from revealing in confession. An apostle is there, the first of the twelve to die, the first priest to die, a suicide at the very hour when the world's redemption was being accomplished, within hailing distance of Christ, touched almost by Christ's saving blood. Of the many called, those not chosen are there. One shudders to think of the multitude, the successive generations of 1,000,000,000 of infidels, the successive generations of 100,000,000 of schismatics, the successive generations of 150,000,000 of heretics and the percentage of bad Catholics, who died without making their peace with the Judge of the living and the dead. Oh, thought of hell ought to make us eternally grateful for the gift of membership in Christ's true Church. We Catholics are the guests let into the wedding-feast; God grant that when the King comes, in the person of death's angel, He may find us all in quiet and secure possession of the wedding-garment of divine grace. Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Ephesians 5; 15–21 *Gospel, St. John 4; 46–53*

"The man believed the word which Jesus said to him."
—St. John 4, 50.

The morning's gospel is full of saving lessons. The humility of the ruler is in itself a persuasive sermon. The history of his faith, small in its beginning as a grain of mustard-seed, and growing before our very eyes to the height of a giant tree, can well serve us for reminder to look to our own faith and take immediate measures to make it of a robuster and stouter sort. The tremendous force resident in persevering prayer is vividly portrayed. Desperate courage, they say, makes one man a majority against the universe; and oft-repeated prayer makes the suppliant strong enough to wrestle with Almighty God Himself. The generosity characteristic of God's dealings with men is apparent everywhere throughout the story. The ruler asks for a temporal favor, the restoration of his son to health. The request is granted, at that very hour the fever leaves the boy. But God is a large giver. His kindness renders Him none the poorer; and, when once faith and humility like those of the ruler get His ear, gifts are showered from His hands. They never come single, they come in troops. And so the boy sat up renewed in body, in soul a son of God. His cheeks put on their old-time healthfulness, his soul experienced the change that Baptism works in children. He emerged in an instant from the darkness and chill of unbelief into the light and genial warmth of faith in God. The ruler's family was spiritually dead, deaf to the messages come down with Christ to the earth; and the ruler's one act of heroism, one worthy prayer, restored the family to life in God, and opened their ears to the truth.

But there is a beautiful background to all these occurrences.

There is a hidden something that might easily escape the notice of a hurried look. I refer to the part adversity plays in the picture. Search, and you will find that the boy's cure and the father's conversion date their origin back to the sad hour when fever invaded the household. Not a word in the story about the mother's agony of heart, about her tearful watchings through the night; about the fond father's oppressive feeling of helplessness; about the gloom that settled on the whole house. No need to tell! The gospel was written for human hearts, for men and women no strangers to the sick room of son or daughter. And they that know, they that have lived long enough to have sickness visit their homes, can readily supply the details. I can easily fancy the emotions uppermost in that mother's heart, when the physicians bade her prepare for the worst. Earth had no hope, and the skies of Heaven were overcast. Human skill knew no remedy; and God, she thought, was busy in some distant corner of the universe, too busy to cast a look her way. But she was mistaken! God was at the door. God was in the chamber of death upstairs. God had strode in with the fever, and God was not going to depart with the grim visitor. He had effected an entrance without exciting any suspicion, and He was going to take up a permanent abode in that family.

Oh the wondrous uses of adversity! It is the mantle God often throws over His shoulders to steal His way into our presence, and engage for a season our undivided attention. He had surrounded this ruler with friends, with position, with whatever luxuries wealth can afford. He had blessed him with a boy, in whom his fondest hopes were centred; with a family, that kept his thoughts and affections at home. And all this while the ruler was unconscious of his benefactor's name, all this while the ruler was journeying with rapid stride towards the gates of death. Joy, and plenty, and health sang to his soul no song redolent with God's love. They were being squandered, they were being employed to school out of the ruler's heart all thoughts of a future life, and limit his aspirations to a hundred years of happiness. They sang to him a siren's song, luring him to eternal loss and ruin.

The ruler had heard vague rumors of a certain wonder-

worker who traveled Judea, and everywhere left evidences of omnipotence over disease. He had, no doubt, formed his opinion concerning the doctrine Christ came to preach, and had some knowledge of the claims Christ laid to the Messiahship. In his affliction he looked to Jesus for relief. Had his prosperity continued with no rude interruption, he would, perhaps, have lived and died without ever taking the pains to increase his small store of faith. But calamity whipped him to his knees, and he went out in the humble capacity of a petitioner to meet Jesus, and the meeting had blessed results. God never strikes to kill! Every chastisement He inflicts has curative powers. He strikes to heal, and every trial He sends a son is another golden opportunity. He inflicts pain only when and where it is needed. He has a balm for every hurt He makes. Has He summoned home a father, a mother, a brother, a sister? He can fill the void in your life their departure created. If you diligently attend in prayer, He can whisper comfort abundantly able to recompense the loss. Has death or estrangement robbed you of friends? Be assured that He removed them only to get closer Himself to your side, only to teach you the hard lesson of resignation and detachment from the world. See in every mishap of life the finger of God! Love adversity! Its uses are manifold. It is a royal road and a sure one. Prosperity is a dangerous thing! The Lord Christ never once deigned to seal it with His benediction. It has elements strangely conducive to forgetfulness of God and Heaven. We never long so ardently for our true home, we never turn with so much childlike earnestness to God, we are never so thoroughly alive with the instincts of faith, as when torn, and bruised, and bleeding with sorrow, as when overwhelmed with a sense of abandonment and loneliness, as when trained in the school of disappointment to despise the comforts this earth has to offer.

The morning's gospel is but the record of a conversion from the darkness and doubt of unbelief to the light and to the courageous avowal of faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ. And, though our presence in this temple of divine worship, and though our reverent attitude during this hour's services are earnest and pledge that we believe as firmly and entirely as did

the ruler of Capharnaum, the history just read from the sacred pages is not without its salutary lessons on the score of faith. Faith, the faith of Catholics, the only faith deserving the name, has received a goodly number of setbacks during the past four hundred years; and the conditions surrounding this present age in a land of freedom and prosperity are highly unfavorable to the growth of faith, and to its practical realization in our lives.

We live among and do business with men, who live in open defiance of all the laws impressed upon us from childhood as the sacredest of obligations. We are cognizant of the small part God plays in their lives, we are acquainted with the material success that attends their undertakings. I have seen the streets of a city, large as our own, packed tight with men, women and children to do the honors of war to a renegade from the Church of his childhood, the faith of his fathers. I have seen flags at half mast, business suspended, to honor the memory of a blatant infidel, a blasphemer who while in life stood on the public platform and defiantly invited God to strike him dead. And we should not be wholly human, if it did not at times occur to us to think that wickedness, impiety and unbelief are, after all, paying investments. The thought once staggered the Royal Psalmist; and that, too, in so overwhelming a manner that he had to soberly sit down and study the thing out. The gist of his reflections on the subject is contained in Psalm 72. There is only one way out of the difficulty, the way David followed. We must with him go into the sanctuary of God, and must with him understand concerning the last end of the wicked.

All the paths of life lead up to one narrow lane, and all the sons and daughters of men, be they kings, queens or beggars, are destined soon or late to walk this way. The mystery of life becomes at last an open secret. The wicked no more prosper, the virtuous weep no more. And yet something still remains unseen, if faith is not called in to assist reason. True, the universality of death is an indisputable fact. We meet death at every turn in the street, and every city of the dead is a silent sermon in cold marble on this topic. But no friend has returned from the grave to tell us how it fares in that

other world with them that went before us. The climax to life's tragedy is to our unaided eyes still wrapped in gloom, and the word of God, as set down in Holy Scripture, is our sole authority for whatever statements we venture in this matter. And to accept a truth with God's unaided word for warrant, is to call faith into play, is to imitate the ruler of Capharnaum, who in today's gospel, "believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way." It is folly to ask for signs and wonders, it is madness and spiritual death to withhold belief till these signs and wonders are forthcoming. Christ comprehended every such mercenary and cowardly disposition, when He said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe"; and in another place, "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou has believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed." The ruler of Capharnaum waited only to hear, "Go thy way, thy son liveth," and the cure of a much loved boy was the reward of his generosity.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Ephesians 6; 10–17 *Gospel, St. Matthew 18; 23–35*

"So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your heart."

—St. Matthew 18, 35.

God is the king, we are the servant; and in today's lesson God wants to lift us from the low-lying depths of our native meanness to the topmost summit of His own magnanimous generosity. Forgiveness is the prerogative of royalty, and revenge is the characteristic of narrow, cramped and shrivelled minds. Giants in whatever order, be it that of physical strength, or regal authority, or intellectual prowess, feel too secure on their thrones to tremble at the approach of danger, to dread the shadow of a low-born rival, to fall into a fit when weak envy moves for war. Conscious of their native worth, of their superiority over misfortune, these giants can afford to smile at the puerile efforts of their enemies, and regard as food for healthful laughter the forceless blows of pigmy foes. And God is King. He rules from end to end mightily; and no power on earth, no power in hell, can shake the pillars of His city gates. The strong coffers of His pity know no bottom; and, because His justice leans for support on the stout right arm of His omnipotence, His mercy can be as wide as the sea, and at the same time figure forth the weakness of water. He can, without emptying His treasury, as easily forgive a debt of ten thousand talents as a debt of a hundred pence. He can, without jeopardizing His dominion in the universe, embrace with tokens of genuine friendship today yesterday's most importunate rebel. The king in the parable, moved with pity, forgave the suppliant servant a debt of ten thousand talents, a debt of ten million dollars. The wicked servant, our

prototype in the story, cast his fellow-servant into prison for a debt of fifteen dollars. And here is the difference between king and caitiff, between royalty and baseness of origin. Mark well the difference, and rise up from your thoughts with a lasting contempt for the spirit of revenge, that brand in the foreheads of ignoble slaves.

We Catholics are kings among men. God wills it, God wills it. And we are false to a sacred trust, if we move to and fro among our neighbors, clad in the rags of spite, horrid with the ignominy of rancor. Yea, more; we are incapacitating ourselves for prayer. Jesus in the Our Father taught us to approach the throne of God's mercy in sentiments, that absolutely preclude all possibility of hatred and revenge. He bade us leave the altar with our gifts, to be reconciled to a brother, if memory of unpardoned wrong sails into our vision. He will have none of our gifts, if the hand that offers is spotted with unkindness. With a deep purpose He so worded in His wisdom the petition, Forgive us our trespasses, that the unforgiving, every time they pray it, call down on their hard hearts and ignorant heads no blessing, but a curse. Without, perhaps, full sense of what they are doing, these unfortunates, in asking the Father to forgive them as they forgive others, are imploring divine kindness to smite them full front with the thunderbolts of His anger. Their forgiveness of injuries, altogether like that of the servant in today's gospel, consists in casting their debtors into prison; and, if God took them at their word, they would be stricken where they knelt, and carried by messenger angels to the dungeons of God's prison house of justice. The heart swayed by bitterness ought to have no love for the Our Father. The man conscious of hard feelings towards a brother, ought in mercy to himself give the Our Father no place in his prayers, or pass in tell-tale silence over its terrifying petition for pardon. Jesus Christ with His Cross for pulpit thought no virtue worthier of first place in His dying sermon than this spirit of forgiveness. And now we pass from parable to reality. He forgave the Jewish priests, He forgave the mob, He forgave the soldiers their crime of God-murder, a debt infinitely greater than talents and dollars without number. These three classes of men were our repre-

sentatives, and memory of the pardon vouchsafed us in their persons can, when every other motive fails, eloquently plead with us to forgive a brother some lesser wrong.

These Jewish priests were the embodiment of hypocrisy and pride, and in the world of sinners they have their imitators. In spite of warnings, in spite of graces put in their way by the Lord Jesus, these proud hypocrites worked incessantly to accomplish Good Friday's tragedy; and, as they wrapped themselves in their cloaks and nodded to one another with a satisfied air, they wore all the characteristics of demons. They were men learned in the Law, and the Prophets. They had studied from their youth all the messages entrusted by God to His chosen people from the beginning. In their readings they must have repeatedly happened on passages in the Old Testament bearing unmistakable witness to the time, place and circumstances of the Messiah's coming. Trained from their childhood to interpret the Sacred Writings, vested with divine authority to guide and govern Israel, they allowed pride to darken their minds, and abused their high prerogative, to eternally destroy a nation they should have died to save. They were the lineal descendants of heroes like Moses, who spared themselves no pains to further the interests of God's Kingdom; who, rather than abandon their faith or their traditions, willingly laid down their lives as martyrs. They were successors in office and in authority to venerable priests like Aaron, who reckoned no sacrifice too great when God's cause was at stake. And yet, in spite of their deep knowledge, in spite of God's protecting grace, in spite of the magnificent record of their ancestors, these men, puffed up with empty esteem of self, filled with a vain sense of their apparent holiness, and greedy of the influence they wielded, stained their hands with the blood of God, and sealed their everlasting condemnation by invoking that blood on their own heads and on the heads of their children. What monuments of stupidity! What unparallelled examples of the dread lengths to which one unmortified passion can drive men! And Christ forgave them.

Some of us, to our shame it must be acknowledged, stand with the mob. Worldliness, slavish subjection to human respect, too ready compliance with the tastes of the wicked, drove

the mob to applaud on Good Friday what the mob a week before would have cried out against as a sin and a crime. The Jewish priests never had an interval of love for the Lord Christ. Their hate was three years old, and every day of the three years witnessed a growth in their hate. Not so the common people. When obedient to their better instincts, they hailed Christ as the Messiah; when played upon by their leaders, they clamored for His death. They once against His will attempted to make Him King. On Palm Sunday they led Him to Jerusalem, spreading the way with green branches, yea with their very garments, and proud of the Hosannas their children sang. And on Good Friday what a fall from their high estate, what a revolution of feeling! They were gathered in groups on the hilltop to mock their uncrowned king, to cruelly add to the torments of their dying Messiah. Is the human mind capable of such madness, are men's hearts so swift to love and hate? They are, indeed; and our own lives are lamentable proofs of fickleness and inconstancy. We are good by fits and starts. Today we entertain angels; tomorrow, demons; and we repeatedly crucify Christ, in spite of our protestations of loyalty and allegiance. When guilty of sin, we are no better than the Jews, who embittered Christ's last moments; and a glance at the scene of sorrow ought to fill us with shame and confusion. The memory of Good Friday ought to keep us to our duty all through the year. We honestly want to be God's friends. We resent the insult of being compared with Christ's murderers. And we are God's enemies, we are Jews nailing Christ to the cross, every time we go wrong from greed, or pride, or pleasure.

How many of us stand with the Roman soldiers, detailed by Pilate to the hill of sorrows as public executioners? These cruel men, used to all the hardships of war, accustomed to bloodshed, reared in all the savagery and ignorance of camp-life, saw in the scene only another opportunity to display their ferocious instincts and the utter contempt in which they held everything Jewish. They are types of the men and women who look not beyond the present life. Little concerned about the hereafter, these fools live content with whatever joys the passing hour puts in their way, and in a mad endeavor to satisfy

desire, defy the law of God, and deny themselves no gratification. They are veritable slaves of passion, and descend at the instigation of passion to the depths of degradation. Here we can with profit pause to examine the condition of our hearts. It is hard to have to acknowledge that our conduct in the past entitles us to no place in the group composed of Mary, John and Magdalene. It is hard to have to acknowledge that our record of sin ranks us with the Jewish priests, with the mob, with the soldiers. But our confessions are our accusers, and conscience wrings from some of us the sad acknowledgment. And yet, wherever we stand, Christ, the Christ we crucified, is piecing together His last breaths for a prayer in our behalf.

And ever since that first Good Friday an unbroken line of men, women and children has poured into the confessional, to kneel at the feet of God's ambassador, and share in the blessings of this universal prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And memory of the countless number of times we have bowed our heads down for absolution, should be an unfailing incentive to forgiveness of injuries. Jesus with His Cross for pulpit thought no virtue worthier of first place in His dying sermon than this spirit of forgiveness. We are sons of the one Father, and our elder brother Christ wants us to be separated from the rest of the world by this line of mutual love. There must be no menials, no slaves in God's household. We are kings, with the magic touch of divine royalty on our brows; and, to rob us of all excuse for hatred based on wrongs done us, to rob us of all excuse for falling away from our birthright of Christian forgiveness, Jesus in His dying hour forgave, and asked God in Heaven to forgive, demons whose hands were red with His adorable blood. In face of so sublimely touching an example, can we allow trifling or heavy hurts to rankle in our bosoms; can we allow a look, a word, a blow, to drive us to fury and goad us to revenge? Oh, no, no; let us rather with Christ pray for these enemies. Let us prove our descent from kings by lifting from the depths of our hearts that sublimest of prayers, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Let us be more concerned at the grievous injury these enemies do themselves in God's sight, than at the small harm they do

us. They know not what they do. They are not now aware of the pains we take to serve God, they are now ignorant of the love we bear them deep down in our hearts. They know not now; but some day they shall know, and the knowledge shall be their sorrow's crown of sorrows.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Philippians 1; 6–11 *Gospel, St. Matthew 22; 15–21*

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's."

—St. Matthew 22, 21.

We are treated in this morning's gospel to another display of Christ's consummate wisdom, to another of those scattered manifestations, which clearly proclaim Christ God. His enemies the Pharisees are plotting His destruction. He is a reproach to their wickedness, and they are determined to shorten His power. It matters little to them what way the thing happens, whether the authorities cast Him into prison for sedition or the people hate Him for an enemy to the Jewish nation. And so they hit on this plan. In the guise of honest searchers for the truth, they propose a question concerning taxes, hoping in any event to entrap Him in His answer. If He advocates the payment of tribute to Cæsar, He proves Himself by the very fact an emissary of Rome, disloyal to Israel. If He puts Himself on record as opposed to the payment of tribute, He will have to reckon with the Roman governor as a disturber of the peace, and a fomenter of sedition. What folly on the part of these short-sighted Pharisees even to hope to worst divine wisdom! God's wisdom is as secure against defeat as God's might. And no power on earth, no power in hell can measure swords with omnipotence, and expect to win. Jesus answers in such a way that neither the people nor Pilate can take offense. He stands for the payment to Cæsar of what belongs to Cæsar, for the payment to God of what belongs to God.

The Pharisees in this scene are a study. Ingratitude, that crime of small minds, is painfully evident in their whole conduct. Instead of endeavoring to find in the Lord Christ's works reasons for belief in His divinity, they are busy sifting

His words to detect in them contradictory statements or lies. What heavy wrong had Christ done His people to deserve such treatment at their hands? He had loved them, when they least deserved it. He had cured their sick, and raised their dead to life. He had exerted His omnipotence to feed them, when they were faint with hunger. He had laid His holy hands on the heads of their children to bless them, and had told the mothers that their children were other angels. He had done all that man and God could do to soften their hard hearts, and win their affection. And today, at one week's distance from His death, He cannot but see that His labors have been in a measure vain. Man's heart is a mystery of iniquity, and the hearts of the Jews were the hearts of men. Clear as is their malice, the Pharisees endeavor to cloak it. They have recourse to flattery, that agency for harm so often employed by the wicked. Unwittingly they set forth for the admiration of future ages what qualities of head and heart endear the Lord Jesus to His followers, and make Him the most conspicuous figure in all history. "He is true," they say; "He walks the way of God, He cares for no man." And the saints reproduce in their lives this characteristic of their Lord and Captain Christ. They are honest men and true; true to themselves, true to God, true to the neighbor. They render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar; they render to God what belongs to God.

A saint is a gentleman. A gentleman is somewhere defined as a man who knowingly and deliberately offends nobody. God, of course, comes into the catalogue of beings, against whom we can offend. But nowadays all reference to God is so studiously avoided, that He grows to be a mere memory, and His place is usurped by meaner persons and meaner things. And so the world is come to reckon him a gentleman, who wraps himself in good clothes to spare admiring eyes offense; who lavishes to right and left the sunshine of a gay demeanor, and keeps on his tongue's end a goodly store of empty nothings, that serve to put friends at their ease. We are far from disparaging these lesser graces of society. We are ourselves sensible to their charm, and we look for them in our friends. But we expect something higher of Catholics. A Catholic gentle-

man is a man that knowingly and deliberately offends nobody, God not excepted. A Catholic gentleman is a hero, willing to break with the universe and scorn kings rather than hurt the heart of God by wrong. Sin is not manful, applause won at the expense of integrity sounds like an echo from the depths of hell, and praise purchased by defiance of God's law is dishonor. A Catholic gentleman is a saint in private life and a public spirited citizen, of right principles and sound integrity; rare old Horace's "justum et tenacem propositi virum." Personal holiness and civic virtue are the two distinguishing characteristics of his sublime life, and one must be handmaid to the other. You are the Catholic sons of Catholic fathers. Your Church is your mother; and, compassed as she is by her enemies, she leans on you for support. If you abandon her, if you make her interests second to any on earth, you are degenerate sons and deserve the obloquy of eternal reprobation. Your faith is the richest jewel you can call your own. If you lose it, all is lost. If you tarnish its fair fame by word or example, you are traitors, and deserve only to be drummed out of camp. With this spirit of faith secured, every good thing follows.

Personal holiness is the result of uncompromising fidelity to the observance of God's commandments and the uniform exercise of virtue. To say nothing of the others, one of these commandments furnishes forth a fair test of the hold faith has on a Catholic, and that is the commandment prescribing Sunday Mass. In our catechism the Mass is everything. It is the one act of devotion, on which our Mother the Church insists. All her children must under pain of sin hear Mass on Sundays and holydays. She knows the infinite value of this august sacrifice; and, to secure its advantages to her children, she makes frequent presence at it a solemn obligation. This matter of Sunday Mass is an easy commandment. It is attended with so little difficulty, that it looks like waste of time and energy to insist at great length on its fulfillment. And yet easy, trivial as it may seem, fidelity to this one commandment is a thing of good omen. It argues at least the presence of strong faith and a spirit of prayer; and, as long as faith and prayer remain alive in a man's heart, he has a fight-

ing chance for salvation. But gross neglect of this precept is a token of fatal and impending ruin. It betrays a weakening all along the lines of the spiritual life. It is the entering wedge for loss of faith. It smells of Protestantism. It is the stone the devil ties around the neck of his victim, before he drowns him in unbelief and hell. Oh, our fathers in the faith appreciated Holy Mass at its true worth. In old Rome they gathered in sand-pits and under the ground, to follow some aged priest through the sacred Mysteries on the eve of their martyrdom. In Ireland, during the dark days of persecution, they risked their lives and lost them rather than miss an opportunity to hear Mass. And we Catholics had men of this stamp for fathers, women of this stamp for mothers. How low some of us are fallen!

Personal holiness is in great measure a free gift of God. In degree it is dependent on man's coöperation with grace, and the sacraments are the distributing depots of this heavenly favor. The sacraments are seven. Of these three can be received but once, Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders. One is reserved to the hour of our death, Extreme Unction. Another is seldom received oftener than once, Matrimony. Two can be received every day of the year, Penance and Holy Communion. Therefore, a Catholic's loyalty to confession and communion is a fair test of his worth in the sight of God, of the earnestness with which he seeks salvation. We have frequent need of these two sacraments. They are the medicine and the food of our soul. A soul in the state of mortal sin is sick, and needs confession. A soul long away from the Holy Table goes hungry, and must languish and die spiritually. In the first ages of our Church, daily communion was the rule, not the exception. The early Christians never heard Mass without approaching the altar-rail, and no day went without its morning Mass.

Membership in some Church sodality or society is another help to advancement in personal holiness, that cannot be neglected without loss. We need the encouragement of mutual support; and, if the men of a parish only knew, as well as we, what a power the force of good example exerts, they would be eager to enroll themselves in the Holy Name Society, in the

Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the League of the Sacred Heart. Membership in the Holy Name is constituted by a bonded promise to reverence the name of Jesus, and cause it to be respected by others; to stamp out the unholy habit of impure talk; and regularly approach the sacraments. Membership in this society is a loud profession of faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is a solemn protest against the shames of a modern Sodom and Gomorrha, it is an open declaration of war against the enemies of God and His divine Son Jesus. And no age in history ever stood in sorer need than our own of such a profession of faith, such a protest, and such a declaration of war. As a matter of fact, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary was first established in the middle of the sixteenth century to hold Catholic young men together, and keep them free from the taint of heresy and consequent corruption. Right thought in the domain of religion, cleanness of heart in the domain of morality, are barriers against that license of opinion and licentiousness of life, which like twin shadows dog the heels of departure from the truth. Faith and purity are sure remedies for the disease of heresy. From the dawn of our era Mary has been a wall in the way of heresy, simply because she is the Mother of God and the Queen of Virgins. Christ when dying made the Queen of His universe the mother of mankind. And we must guard this treasure. We must be loyal sons to this mother. Her sodalities are the tenting places of her special friends, her scapular is the badge of her true and tried soldiers, her rosary is our watchword in life's battle. Members of her sodality carry away from each meeting new strength against temptation, hell cannot touch the dead who die clothed in her scapular, and her rosary has whipped heresy out of empires and won whole kingdoms to Christ. The League is an association of prayer, built on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with a world's conversion for purpose. It is essentially a praying body, composed of thirty millions of Catholics pledged to pray daily for the coming of the Kingdom. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we have God's own word for it, was reserved to these later times to be a shield against the dangers peculiar to our age. We

need to get behind that shield. God is not in the habit of setting up useless and unnecessary defenses. We can hardly compass salvation without this help.

With the humility of faith for foundation, with strict loyalty to Sunday Mass and the other commandments of God and His Church, with a hunger and a thirst for Holy Communion, with membership in the various Church societies, dedicated to the Holy Name, to the Virgin Mother of God, and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you cannot fail of personal holiness, you cannot fail of modelling your lives along the lines of sanctity, you cannot fail of rendering to God the things that are God's.

But a Catholic gentleman is more than a saint in private life. He is a public spirited citizen in the arena of affairs. Besides rendering to God the things that are God's, he renders to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. He takes a strong hand in the stirring events of his time, and leaves traces of his giant faith in the pages of history. He is possessed of every civic virtue from love of God and religion to love of country and authority. And we Catholics of these United States have work ahead of us, that could well tax the energies and the expedients of history's sublimest hero. To silence God's enemies, we must set in motion every energy at our disposal. As citizens of this republic, we must scorn to degrade the ballot to the vile uses of foes to God and foes to religion. As Catholics, we must unfurl our banner and take a heroic stand in the affairs of our country's history. We must fill the public eye with reminders of virtue, and religion, and God. We must keep the trumpet of God's glory to our lips, ready to blow everywhere tidings of God's law and His mercies. We must be aggressively Catholic. Our enemies pretend to clamor for peace, but they approach us with clubs behind their backs; and they are doing all in their power to check the growth of God's Kingdom. Witness Europe, witness America. The schools are engines of war in iniquity's hands. Politics are being turned to unholy uses. Secret societies make the work of the wicked most effective.

There are among us propagators of a false and godless system of education; and, politically speaking, they must be put out of business, their opportunities for harm must be shortened. Reason as well as experience quite satisfies me that the problem of

good citizenship admits of solution only on the basis of right education, and that whatsoever evils afflict our country can be laid at the door of an educational system, that excludes God from the class-room. Education is not mere instruction; and education is not worthy of the name, unless young hearts are taught to love God, while young minds are trained in human sciences. Our system of godless education is turning out a generation of vipers, destined soon or late to sting our republic to death. The mailed hand of the assassin is abroad in our land, and authority is its consecrated victim. There can be no true citizenship, unless founded on the knowledge and fear of God. Conscience is no stay against crime, when no God of reality and omnipotence sanctions its promptings. A government based on irreligion is doomed to swift decay. Instruction without piety, without faith, sets loose on the world a brood of polished thieves, polished libertines, whose good conduct is no deeper than the surface, who halt at no crime, if only they can hide it from the light. Mere instruction, the knowledge that ministers simply to the mind, with no visible influence for good on the character or will, is as empty as a game of hazard. It can, unfortunately, through the medium of false philosophy, put arguments into the mouth of anarchy, and arm the cowardly assassin's hand with a sword. And by a strange perversion of ideas instruction is nowadays rated everything, education is abandoned to neglect and contempt.

These are the lessons you are to carry away with you from this morning's gospel. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. Have high ideals. Hitch your wagon to a star. We are not in harmony with the plans of our Maker, unless saints in private life, unless public spirited citizens in the arena of affairs. Faith, humility, and purity; daily prayer, Sunday Mass, monthly communion and unswerving loyalty to all of God's commandments; honesty, integrity and devotion to principles that are sound and principles that are true; allegiance to Church, fondness for country, zeal for her best interests, and fearless advocacy of right methods in the field of education; these are the lessons that the Lord Christ wants you to remember longest; and the Lord Christ is going to measure your love for

Him, your gratitude for the pains He took and takes in your regard, by the steadfastness and exactness, with which you reduce these lessons to practice. These lessons are the foundation-stone of Catholic culture; they are, under Heaven, the securest helps to enable us to meet together some day, as we meet this morning, closer to God's throne than we are now, fuller even of present joy and freer from distant dread.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Philippians 3; 17–21 *Gospel, St. Matthew 9; 18–26*

"The girl is not dead, but sleepeth."
—St. Matthew 9, 24.

Manifold are the uses of adversity. When patiently borne, it gives new glory to God, chastens and sweetens the heart, and sows with jewels the crown awaiting God's friend in Heaven. It is a voice of the divinity, loud enough to be heard above the surrounding noises of temptation and sin, and reaching to the innermost recesses of the soul. It is often the last available voice at God's disposal, and rouses the sleeper after every other call fails. History is my witness, and every man's experience lends weight to history's testimony. The ruler mentioned in today's gospel as a shining model of adversity's uses, is no solitary example. He has company, and in the every-day affairs of men faith is winning through the agency of misfortune victories as conspicuous as she won in his case. Faith is submissiveness; and stubborn pride, fostered by easy content and smooth prosperity, is faith's most stubborn enemy. Death at home or disaster in business has whipped to God's feet many a rebel son, deaf to God's grace and defiant of God's threats. A reversal in the tide of fortune, the intrusion of an uncanny spectre, somehow or other opens a man's eyes wide, clears his vision, and irresistibly drives him to serious thought.

This ruler, no doubt, had small time and smaller inclination to think of his soul's concerns, till the sickness, the slow decay and final demise of a fond daughter warned him of a superior presence in the universe. His influence, his wealth were no match for death; and, in his utter helplessness, he looked anxiously about for death's master. Word had drifted his way of a wonder-worker, Christ, vested with the dread prerogative of dominion over health and disease, life and death;

and nothing was left him to do but go out and find Christ, and cast himself on His mercy. It must have cost his pride a struggle to go out in the capacity of a suppliant and beggar to the Messiah Christ, scornfully referred to by the first men of Judea as the carpenter's son from Nazareth. Had any lesser sorrow than a daughter's death weighed down his heart, he might, perhaps, have closed his ears again to the warning whisper of grace, and missed salvation. And God was only adjusting His mercy with nice precision to the exigencies of the occasion, when He dealt the ruler this heavy blow. Every hurt our Father in Heaven does His sons is necessary, every affliction He allows to bow them down is a blessing in disguise, and reveals its true nature only in the light of after-events. The death of his daughter was the best possible thing that could happen to the ruler; and, when he began to taste the blessedness of truth, he must have often gone to his knees to thank God for the favor. It is highly wrong for us to lose heart or to repine in our distresses, it is silently to reproach God with unwisdom, to greedily crave escape from a sorrow. Patience, or hope, or consecration, is our duty, in such circumstances; and we are throwing away a golden opportunity, if we come out of the ordeal less virtuous, less men of God, than we entered it. We ought to welcome pain, we ought to welcome disappointment with outstretched arms, knowing as we do that they may work for us the eternal weight of glory they worked for the ruler. Viewed in this light, every calamity is a new grace of God; and even the death of a dearly loved child is a favor.

And human thought knows nothing more melancholy than the death of the young. It is so out of harmony with our ideas of the proper, that it seems almost a crime against nature. "For age to die, is right," some poet sings, "for youth, is wrong." It is as if a bright particular star, without any apparent reason, fell from the firmament; it is as if a nipping frost made descent upon the roses of middle summer. And yet God can use an accident of the kind to drive home a lesson. God can mercifully save a father through the death of a daughter. This was the disguise, under which an angel knocked at the door of the ruler's house; and, when the ruler

left home to follow that angel, he little knew that he was going to return with the author of life and the giver of the gift of faith. He finds the Master measuring swords with his old enemies the Pharisees, making their position less and less tenable with new arguments. The discussion is broken off, and Jesus rising up follows him with His disciples. Oh, the condescension of the Son of God, to interrupt His labors for the purpose of doing a kindness to this lost sheep of Israel! Oh, the gentle Saviour's tender regard for charity, tempering even His zeal to satisfy its demands! Charity is the exercise of zeal's highest prerogative, and a good deed done in silence travels farther and faster than many an eloquent sermon. A Catholic legion in the employ of Imperial Rome once saved a whole pagan town to the faith by its conspicuous charity. And in today's gospel a miracle of tenderness reached the ears and changed the heart of a man, deaf to every other appeal and hardened against the truth. Argument would have been lost on the ruler. He was in no fit frame of mind for controversy. But the grief attendant upon the loss of his young daughter, made easy passage for the grace of God, under the garb of friendliness. God drew near in charity, and every doubt disappeared. "She is not dead, but sleepeth." Before the Saviour's coming death must have been hedged round about with peculiar terror. Immortality is a dogma of nature; and, although it somewhat allayed the fears of honest minds when confronted with death, the haziness and uncertainty surrounding belief in a future existence made even the philosophers of paganism tremble. Even now, in the full light of Christianity, with the glory of Heaven in the dim distance, death is an impressive thing, and memory of death is not without its terrors.

And, if religion did not rob death of some of its terrors, why religion would not be half the blessing it is. We can escape a big sorrow by taking our heart in our hands and plunging into the whirl of enjoyment. We can flee the face of an enemy by journeying to the other side of the earth. But death is without a remedy. No corner of the universe affords a secure retreat against the annoyance of this grim visitor. Death is a decree, with the omnipotence of God at its back for sanction;

it is a law, wrapped up in our very members; it is a prospective point, towards which we are hurrying, even while we sleep. In the vivid words of a pagan poet, death climbs the vessel's side to sail with his victim to foreign parts; and, seated in the stern, eyes him throughout the voyage; death with the same steady stride aproaches the prince's palace and the peasant's hut, to knock at the door, and bid prince and peasant forth to doom and darkness; death rides behind the warrior galloping down to the thick of the fight; and death every day of the year claims men, women and children enough to people a little republic. Even religion cannot stay death's hand; but religion can and does lighten the leaden heavy weight of that hand; religion can and does invest death with a loveliness, that almost makes it welcome. In the language of our ancestors in the faith there was no such word as death. Separation of soul and body was termed "sleep in Jesus, sleep in the Lord." And, therefore, in the hollow hallways of the Catacombs, the last resting places of the early Christians are all marked in the same sweet way. Men of fourscore and children of tender years lie hid behind tablets, bearing ever the same simple record, "Asleep in Jesus, unto the day of resurrection." Not a whisper about the troubles, and the trials, and the watchings; not a breath about the scenes of blood, about the roars of the beasts in the amphitheatre. Nothing, nothing but sleep, and rest, and light; with a cross carved above and a cross carved below. For weariness in the shadow of Christ's cross wears to sleep; and trouble endured for the Master yields to rest without end; and the darkness of Good Friday heralds in the blinding light of Easter morning. And their sleep shall know no waking, their rest shall be unbroken; and, in the realms of perpetual light, no night shall chase away the day. Their eyes are filled with the vision of God, their ears are soothed with unfailing music, and their hearts are temples of peace, of the peace of the sons and daughters of God.

Nothing is more certain than death; nothing more uncertain than death's time, place and circumstances. No one disease, no one affliction is more widespread. The forward chapters in every life's history are wonderfully varied and different. This man acquires wealth; that man journeys through life with

poverty for constant companion. This man wins a world's applause; that man passes his years in the obscurity of a farm, where no one but wife and children knows his name. This man's life is full of incident, full of adventure, full of romance; that man's life is a dull, silent round of waking, eating, and sleeping; devoid of noise and activity; devoid of passion's rise and fall; a stranger to alternations of hope, and love, and hate. But the last chapter in every man's life is the same. Death closes the book. Death writes the Finis. Death is the end, and the last page in every man's history is the same; a bottle of medicine, a glass and a spoon, skull and cross-bones and an old man greybearded, bald and bent, with a scythe in one hand and an empty hour-glass in the other.

And death, all certain and universal as it is, has terrors of its own. It was meant by God for a punishment; and, when God attempts a thing, He accomplishes His purpose. He has surrounded death with a hedge of thorns, and it hurts of its very nature. It is the separation of two close and lifelong friends, the soul and the body. The soul is going home; the body is getting ready for the grave. Disease, or time, or accident, has rendered the body an unfit dwelling place for the soul; and the soul's departure is imminent and near. We were not made to die. In God's original plans, men were to live their allotted time on earth, and then be carried alive to Heaven, without the rude interference of death. But sin spoiled God's plans, and soul and body are in agony with pain. Men when dying gasp frantically for the air, and fight for the breath that keeps life moving. But an overwhelming weakness ensues, energy falls and the fight ceases. Death has done its worst, and death's victim is still. A night comes for all of us, that shall have no morning. Some evening the sun shall set, and we shall not see him rise again. And oh, the pain we are going to experience in that dread hour! Why, when years away from the scene, the very thought of it makes us instinctively shudder and experience discomfort. What will the reality be? An eternal farewell to this life and its thousand circumstances, a departure and an arrival. Like a thief in the night, death comes when least expected, when most unwelcome; bent on separating us from our possessions, our friends, our

very hopes. This artist, known the world over for his achievements with brush or pencil, makes acquaintance with death, when engaged on what he agrees to reckon his masterpiece. It may be a portrait, it may be a landscape. As the lines grow on the canvas, and the figure assumes shape, everlasting fame draws nearer, and fortune is within the painter's grasp. But one day sickness invades the studio, and smites its owner a-tremble. His head reels, his hand refuses to work. He crawls to bed; and, while the fever runs its course towards death, his eyes wander restlessly from brush to colors and back again; his heart is torn with regrets; hope falls, and rises, and falls; and he dies. This sculptor has been chiselling a group or figure for weeks, months, years. He is in a nervous hurry to finish. Disease calls a halt, and sheer force of pain interrupts his work. He watches the dust gather on his tools, notes the disorder created by attendants, dreams uneasily of his lost labor; and he dies. This poet, child of fancy and prophet of song, complains one day of a tired brain, and closes his book regretfully. Death has marked him for next victim, and he is half aware of his fate. The public has been receiving his verses with favor; the ambition of his life, a seat among the immortals, is on the verge of accomplishment; and he hates even to think of failure. But his body is sick, his mind is dull and dead. Fancies, he would fain clothe in words and commit to paper, play elusively in his imagination. Other thoughts come and go like flashes. One thought abides. It is that killing sense of pain, the prelude to final dissolution. His crowning song remains unsung, his manuscript is unfinished, some leaves in the book are yet blank; and he dies. This man of business has for years nursed prospects, that are now well on the way towards realization. He has already acquired a comfortable fortune, the result of shrewd industry and honest hard work. In a few more years he will retire and enjoy the honorable ease purchased by a life of activity. One day he stays away from business. Next day the store is closed, doors bolted, shutters drawn. He hastily sets his affairs in order; and he dies. This mechanic goes off to work in the morning with a cheery farewell for wife and children on his lips. That day an accident has place. He falls from a high building, and

his life is crushed out on the pavement below. A sad-eyed messenger knocks timidly at the door of his home, and another family is plunged in grief, another widow and other orphans go out into a cold and heartless world. Fathers and husbands are daily dying, their last hours embittered by wives and children in tears. Wives and mothers are daily dying, and the same sad sight oppresses their eyes. Boys and girls, their lives just opening to the light, their ambitions just awakening, are taking their departure, spoiling the world of sunshine, and leaving homes desolate. And everything must be left behind, money, pleasure, honor. The dead carry with them only their grave-clothes, and their title to a few feet of ground is not secure. That bank account, which absorbed their attention to the neglect of God's interests, passes to others, who little suspect the curse in hiding between its leaves, the wail of a lost soul. That wealth, they acquired at the expense of God's commandments, descends to their heirs; and heirs have been known to quarrel over the provisions of a will on their way home from the cemetery.

But these things are, after all, trifles thin as air, compared with the dread uncertainty about our future lot. To hell or Heaven? In one awful moment the answer to this question must come; and only saints can find an answer at all able to satisfy their troubled hearts. We must all one day die; and, as friends slip from our hazy vision, we shall look to our past lives for comfort and support. We shall again and again put to ourselves that hard and searching question, so confidently answered by the dying Jesus, "Is it consummated, is it finished, is your work done, completely done?" What work? Why, the work your Father gave you to do, the work of your soul's salvation. We are not here to enjoy ourselves. God rates higher the priceless gift of time. We are not here to amass wealth, and property, and honor. God is too wise to squander years on purposes so vain that they can be accomplished by a trick of the hand, a turn in the tide of fortune. We are here to save our souls. That is the one thing necessary. Wealth, and pleasure, and honor are pastimes. They afford men recreation, they make men more content with their exile in this valley of tears. And God allows His servants to seek

in them a refuge from the sterner and more serious employments of life. But He never meant His sons to waste their years on trifles of the sort. Our life-work is other. In baptism we received a commission to fight the devil, his works and pomps, and cut a way through temptation back to the heart of God. We must be about this business of the Father. Though it sometimes yields to other cares, though it sometimes slips our memory for days, and weeks, and months, at the hour of death it is going to be the consideration uppermost in our thoughts, it will occupy our minds to the exclusion of everything else. A man's soul is his one immortal possession; and, when face to face with death, this truth dances with fearful vividness before his eyes. His wealth he must leave behind, his old pleasures are now no solace, his honors are little worth in this supreme moment. He is on the threshold of a new existence. He is on tiptoe waiting to be ushered into the presence of the God of majesty, and this God has scattered the pathway of his life with warnings to make ready against this day of days. Who can count the thoughts, the hopes, and the fears crowded into the few short moments of a man's death-agony? And all these thoughts, all these hopes, all these fears, turn on the answer to one single question, that question the Lord Christ so fully answered, when He said from the summit of the Cross, "It is consummated." God grant that we may then be able to make His words our own. Our records shall be our answer. Our sins shall be our accusers. Our virtues shall be our guardian angels of hope. They say that the near approach of death opens a man's eyes wide to the truth, that a sinner's whole life then lies before him like the pages of a printed book, with every detail writ large. All his negligences, all his crimes, pass in ghastly review, to declare with a loud voice that his work is not finished, that his life is a failure. And eternity with all its slow length of years cannot repair the loss. The season of opportunity is gone, and the sad fate of the wicked is unchangeable. Night overtakes them half way on their journey, and they must grope in the dark forever.

When an old Greek or Roman died, his friends used put a penny between his dead lips, fare for the grim ferryman, who piloted spirits across the river Styx to the abodes of immor-

tality. Their rude notions about the divinity, about Heaven and hell, made the ancients fear nothing more than shipwreck or abandonment in death, because in these contingencies they would have to go down to the shore of the river without their penny, the inflexible boatman would refuse to give them passage, and they would have to wander up and down the banks a thousand years in impenetrable gloom. Since those times of passion, and sin, and religious ignorance, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Eternal Father, has visited our earth, and in the light of His authoritative teaching we know what the old Greeks and Romans neglected to take the pains to learn. Their penny was what luxury and the laziness of iniquity substituted for purity of life, for laborious cleanliness of heart, the only coin able to purchase the right to see God face to face in Heaven, and taste happiness forever. The penny, the river Styx, the oozy barge, the greybeard Charon were all myths; and, because long ago exploded, our modern pagans have recourse to subterfuges more vain, more silly and dishonest. The pity of the thing is that these modern pagans cannot purchase a hollow peace by crawling behind a lie as monstrous and consoling as this fiction of the ancients. Why, were it fashionable today to believe in the existence of Charon and his toll-rate, what would be easier for a man ashamed of his record than to persuade some friend to procure for him burial without the penny? A thousand years in the thickest gloom afford a pleasanter prospect than an eternity in the fires of hell. And the aspirations of a Huxley, a demigod of today's science, craved nothing higher after death, if we can believe his epitaph, than a long, long sleep that should know no waking, a return to original nothingness. Your modern pagan has an instinctive dread of immortality.

But there is a life beyond the grave; and, unfortunately for the rebel sons, who glut their passions in spite of God's law, all, all without exception, shall have to cross the river, all without exception shall have to walk the road on the other side up to the throne of God, to be read through and through by the searcher of men's hearts. And woe betide the man, woman, or child, in whose soul the eyes of God cannot discover that mark of predilection, the seal of divine grace. Against such the gates of Heaven shall be forever closed; and, after the

last day, every inhabitable place outside of Heaven shall be a corner of hell. These dying sinners can allege no valid excuse for their folly, they can urge no sound plea for mercy. God has been lavish of His gifts. To make them saints, He has done everything but rob them of their free will. And, in spite of His bounty, the term of their days finds them empty handed and crushed with remorse. They stand face to face with a mad and hungry beast in a narrow pass, and their doom is inevitable. In every other accident of life a man can hope. In every other accident a man can roll all his energies into one, and by a tremendous effort, perhaps, escape. But when death once fastens on his heart-strings, there is no escape. And when death strikes him down in the midst of his sins, hope grows amazingly small, and he misses her sweet presence. And we can die but once. We cannot repeat the experiment. We cannot correct the mistakes we make in our first trial. Our doom is settled, and settled beyond repair or change. Hence the need of making ready in time. Hence the need of ordering our lives along the strict lines of God's commandments. Death has no great terrors for the faithful sons of God. It is the voice of a Father, summoning His sons home, the herald of peace without end. But it sounds on the ears of a culprit with all the harshness and severity of a stern judge's sharp tones. It reproaches its victim with prayers omitted night and morning; with curses uttered in anger; with Sundays profaned; with a parent's despised authority; with old hatreds and scandals; with immodesties practised in secret; with theft, slander, drunkenness, laziness and general impiety. A good life is the best preventive of an unhappy death.

Men are triflers by nature. We put off effort till danger is right up against us, and too often for want of preparation we encounter disaster and ruin. We behave in exactly the same way with regard to death. We know its certainty. We are aware of the tremendous interests at stake; and yet, on account of our native laziness, we are too timid to get down to sober, serious work, and make our lives a long preparation for death. We make no fight against our passions. We stay in bed, when we ought to get up early for Sunday Mass. We are too tired to pray, too mean to do anything in the cause of God, in the

cause of virtue. And death catches us at our worst. You cannot count for certain on the priest's presence at your death-bed. You cannot count for certain on a clear head, a tranquil mind, and strength of will in your last moments. Sudden deaths are by no means infrequent. And this calamity is a nearer menace today than ever. In olden times war operated to adjust the problems of population and territory. Today the nations are at peace, and war's functions in the process of killing are usurped by humanity's mad race for wealth, by greed of pleasure, and by mechanical devices for speed and luxury. The human frame is being subjected to a strain it cannot stand, and life is being ruthlessly stamped out for purposes of commerce and sport. And this calamity of a sudden death is no respecter of persons. It spares no class or condition. Delay, therefore, is fatal. The story of the good thief was never meant for an incentive to sin. For our encouragement one of the two thieves was saved, while gasping out his life on the cross. The other, to inspire us with a wholesome dread of God's judgments, went cursing to hell. One cross was no farther from the Cross of Christ than the other. Grace pleaded in the same tender accents with one thief and the other. Christ Jesus looked with equal pity to left and right. And yet, in spite of it all, only one was saved. In spite of Heaven's omnipotence the lost thief made irrevocable choice of eternal ruin; and, where the tree falls, there it lies.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Epistle, Colossians 1; 9–14 *Gospel, St. Matthew 24; 15–35*

"And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice; and they shall gather together the elect from the four winds."
—St. Matthew 24, 31.

This last Sunday of Pentecost marks the close of the Ecclesiastical year, and its gospel is a vivid description of the world's end, solemn prelude to the general judgment. Everything, therefore, invites us to dwell a while on this momentous function. There are two judgments, the particular and the general. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment." Hebr. 9, 27. Death, and after death, the judgment. This is St. Paul's solemn announcement of the first, or particular judgment. It has place simultaneously with the soul's departure from the body. In the realm of God's activity time plays no part; what God does, He does in an instant. The soul loosed from the body enjoys this same rapidity of movement. Therefore, the physician and weeping friends have hardly satisfied themselves that life is gone from the still corpse, before God has opened the books and shut them, and waved the wondering soul to left or right, to hell or Heaven. And for that soul eternity begins. Its body sleeps a space in the church-yard, till God sends an angel on the last day to piece it together again, reunite it with the soul, and make body and soul partners forever in joy or pain. Some bodies lie fathoms down at the bottom of the surging sea, others crumble to dust in the desert, others at the foot of mountain-precipices that never sheltered a living thing. But God knows the exact location of all, and God's angels shall find all, when they ride the four winds. God knows everything, and God never forgets.

And the book of judgment? Why, that is God's memory,

infinite, sure and wide. Every human being, from Adam to the last of mankind, has two pages in that book. One is a record of his good deeds, his virtues; the times he said his prayers, the Sundays he heard Mass devoutly, the days he met temptation in the street, and passed it by untouched, the nights he did stout battle with demons and won. The other contains the lurid record of his shame, his sins; neglected prayers, Sundays profaned, the days he met temptation and walked arm in arm with it, the nights he fell a victim to passion and cast decency, honor, honesty, to the winds. This second page bears trace of many an erasure. After each good confession, God cancels this side of the old score, and opens a new account. And this book is God's history of the world, a faithful narrative of every incident He thinks worthy of notice. No mention is made between its pages of the wars, the expeditions, the revolutions, that play so prominent a part in what we call history. These count for nothing in the eyes of God, and beyond the grave they shall impress us as little. A man's virtues, a man's sins; these are, after all, the items of real importance; and, strange to say, they are the points about which our neighbors are least concerned. After the last day all mankind shall be divided into two vast armies, the elect and the lost; and God wants to have a clear knowledge of where each man belongs. He wants to have everything in readiness, to make it easy for His angels to get the sheep on one side, the goats on the other.

Our names are in that book, with their two pages. How does our account stand at present? Are we ready to go out now and stand trial? If not, we need confession. There are lines on the side of sin, not yet crossed out; and this business were better immediately settled. The papers throughout the world will tomorrow morning have accounts of sudden deaths here, there, everywhere. And what about the future, next week, next month? Well, need I put you on your guard? All the paths of life lead up to one narrow lane, and all the sons and daughters of men, be they kings, queens, or beggars, are destined soon or late to walk this dark way. Death is the logical consequence of life. As soon as the child is born, we can begin digging a hole in the ground, with the utmost assurance that it

will one day have an occupant. Our turn comes to join the throng passing in unbroken procession before the throne of God. Each case is disposed of in the twinkling of an eye. God's friends, the chosen few, who in life respected Him and His law, are ushered into bliss unending. His enemies are crowded into the devouring flames of hell. As long as life lasts, God is merciful to the sinner, patient beyond the telling; but, as soon as death closes the period of probation, God lays aside mercy, and puts on the armor of justice. His hand is then raised to crush His enemies; and where that hand falls it does fearful execution.

God is magnificent in His rewards. He is no less magnificent in His punishments. By a kind of necessity He hates sin; and, though, to banish sin forever from His sight, He has to hurl to the depths of hell the soul that cost Him so much blood and so many tears, He cannot hesitate, His mind is made up, and the soul stays forever where it falls. God would not be God, if He could abide sin; and God would not be God, if He failed to consign to unending torments the men and the women who die in their sins. This debt He owes to His holiness, and He would not be worthy of our supreme worship, could He act otherwise. Hence the careful scrutiny, with which this first or particular judgment is made. Hence the rapidity with which reward and punishment follow on the heels of death.

But there is another judgment, a solemn ceremony decreed for the end of the world. This last or general judgment shall reverse no ruling of the first. The inhabitants of hell shall journey that day to the valley of Jehosophat, but they shall carry their pains with them. The inhabitants of Heaven shall descend to the same valley, but the interval shall be no interruption to their everlasting happiness. God would seem to want all the nations of the world to meet in one grand assembly, to witness a visible display of His justice, and pay the homage of acknowledgment to its fairness. He would seem to want to heap His enemies with shame, and vindicate to His friends universal applause. Hypocrites must be uncovered, criminals must be stripped of their disguises, and stand before their fellow-men in all their native hideousness. Saints, who for the Master's sake welcomed obscurity, contempt and suffering, must

enjoy in the eyes of the whole world the fame to which they were entitled. Wrong's victories over right must be turned down, and virtue's majesty must be published to all tribes and all peoples. God has condemned one part of mankind to hell, another part He has invited to Heaven; and He wants to justify His conduct, free it from all suspicion of prejudice and favoritism. He wants to show that He punished only men deserving of punishment, and rewarded only men deserving of reward. These may be some of the reasons influencing God to gather together the nations of the world at the last day. Whatever the reasons, we have Christ's own word for it, that such a meeting will be called. He describes the solemn event in the 24th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew's gospel. "And immediately after the tribulation of these days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of Heaven shall be moved. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven. . . . And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds. . . . Then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."

We can hardly picture the scene to ourselves. The very number of men, women and children in that immense throng baffles our capacity. Begin to count, and it runs into figures, with which we are not acquainted. Within every hundred years the world's face undergoes a complete change in the matter of inhabitants, so that an entirely different set of people occupies its surface. There must be more than a hundred millions of souls in our own country at this present time, and other por-

tions of the globe are far more populous. To get an idea of the multitude awaiting judgment in Jehosophat, we would have to add together all the men, women and children alive at the present hour, all who have died since the first morning of time, and all yet to be born till the end of the world. The task is quite impossible to our limited intelligence, but in the mind of God everything is clear. He can not only count them, but their faces, their hearts are as open and plain to His eyes as the sunshine. He knows them all as a mother knows her children. No one could be absent from his appointed place that day without being missed, and God is familiar with the record of every individual in the crowd.

So there they stand, the men, the women and the children of all time, looking with eager anxiety towards the cloud on which the Son of Man is seated, as on a throne of judgment. And lo! the trial begins. No need of witnesses, no need of sentence. Every man's heart is his own accuser. On every man's forehead is branded love or hate, the seal of condemnation or the seal of approval. God's grace shall be the test of redemption. Its absence shall be the token of eternal ruin. The angels, who marshal together on the right the souls of the elect, and the angels, who marshal together on the left the souls of the lost, shall have only to glance at the foreheads of the multitude to select. And after the day's work is over, the sheep shall be more resplendent than ever with this mark of the Lamb, the goats shall be horrid with the brand of the beast. It is well worth our while to work while it is yet light; for the night cometh in which no man shall work. If God's grace is not with us in death, we shall not chance upon it along the dark road the dead travel to eternity. It is the experience of ages that grace assists at the deathbeds of only such as valued and cultivated its friendship during childhood, youth and old age. Men on terms of intimacy with sin are strangers to this benediction of Heaven; and, when conscience reproaches us with nothing, grace is as close to us as our very life. Sin robs the soul of grace. A good confession can restore the gift. But confession is too late after death. No confessions can be heard on the day of judgment. Now is the time,—today. We must, therefore, begin at once to make ready beforehand for

the ordeal of this last terrible trial. After His angels have separated the good from the bad, Christ addresses a few words, first to the good, and then to the wicked. To the good He says: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the wicked He says, "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

The trial is over, the day's work is done; and the two armies march off in opposite directions. The saints, led by the Lord Christ, ascend in triumph to Heaven; and, after the last has entered, its gates are shut and sealed forever. Sinners, led by demons, go down in sorrow to the pool of fire burning with brimstone, to the prison-house of God's justice; and, after the last has entered, the key is turned in the lock, broken, and its fragments are scattered to the four corners of the world. Out of hell there is no redemption. Where the tree falls, there it lies.

No such misfortune can overtake the men and women honestly intent on God's service. Look at that other army rising to Heaven. The sweet comfort of having done their duty beats on their ears like the music of a song. It is honey to their lips, and their hearts are glad. Night finds them at the end of their journey, ready to begin on the morrow a new life, without sorrow, and sadness, and change. The evening bell summons them home from the fields, where all day long they worked perseveringly and well. And blessed are they that sit down to supper at the table of the Lamb. They went out in the morning to sow. They worked while it was yet light, scattering broadcast the seed of virtue and good example; and now, as the sun sets on a dying world, they are standing at the door of God's eternity, with full ripe sheaves in their arms. Oh, such a reward is worth a hundred times over the agony and effort it costs to overcome temptation, deny self and persevere in virtue. And the thought must be ever with us, to hold us to our duty and strengthen us against passion's fury. Every victory we win is a reserve fund of courage for the end. Every time we keep our hearts clean, when close to defilement, we are setting to music death's song of thanksgiving. No more sorrow, no more pain. And this is Heaven, the home towards

which we journey; the home of our Father, where brothers without number expectant stand to greet and welcome us. We need to pause now and then in our labors, wipe the sweat from our brows, and see beyond the clouds the bliss towards which we are striving.

Does anybody here present feel too weak to promise himself the victory? Does Heaven seem impossible to any? Then I say to him that sin has robbed him of his strength. The remedy is a visit to the confessional, "Go, show yourself to the priest." He will cure your sickness. He will put the grace of God in your hands again, and God's grace is God's omnipotence. With God for helper, nothing is impossible. Recall that story told of the first Napoleon. During a battle one of his officers sent from a distant corner of the field a message to this effect, "General, I have the honor and the pain to report that it is impossible to drive the enemy from his position." Napoleon read the note hurriedly, and then, with an impatient wave of the hand, cried out in anger, "Go back, sir, and tell your captain that impossible is not a French word!" Small need to say that the captain took new courage from his commander's remark, and soon had the enemy in full flight. In the same way, I say to you that impossible is not a Catholic word. It is hard to whip the devil, but not impossible. He is not all-powerful. He can employ against us only what strength we give him ourselves. We are weak by nature, and weaker still from repeated failures. But we are not alone in this business of our soul's salvation. God is with us, and God is omnipotent, and God has solemnly promised to lend us all the strength we need to rout the devil. It is too late now to turn back. We have spent too many years already battling for the right to run away from the fight and give up. A few more years of patience, and all will soon be over. Retreat is out of the question, surrender is out of the question. We can whip the devil. We can and we must get to Heaven, whatever the cost. Perhaps, you never heard of the way in which a brave drummer-boy changed defeat into victory for another officer in one of Napoleon's campaigns. The French were being driven back at every point of the line. The officer in command looked uneasily about for the drummer-boy of his division, and hur-

riedly ordered him to sound retreat. The little fellow, with tears in his eyes, looked up to the soldier on horseback, doffed his cap, and said, "Oh, sir, my teacher never taught his pupils how to beat the call for a retreat; but, if you want a charge, I can play a charge, that will make the rocks and the trees move forward." The old officer wept with the boy, and, stooping down to pat his cheek, cried out in tones loud enough to be heard all over the field, "Then, my boy, sound your drum for a charge!" And the frightened soldiers stood still, patched up their broken ranks, and, under the influence of the boy's inspiring music, swept the enemy before them, and won the day. And we never learned from our Mother how to fall back and lose courage, when hard pressed by temptation. We are Catholics, sons and daughters of God's own Mother, brothers and sisters to martyrs who died rather than desert their faith, their purity, their holiness. We bear the very names of heroes hanged, drawn and quartered in time of persecution by the enemies of God and His Church, ravening like wolves for blood. We are Catholics, and Catholics never give up. Catholics are trained to fight ahead, no matter how gloomy the prospects. Wounds are no sure omen of final defeat, wavering in the onward march to God is no good reason for despair. When covered with wounds, when sinful from head to foot, we must drag ourselves to the priest in confession. He can heal our hurts. When tempted to fall down with fatigue and die ingloriously, we must get to our knees and pray God for new strength. He can make us strong enough to meet and vanquish all hell. But we must never give up; we must never turn back and run. When thrown down, we must rise up, and go on fighting as before. This battle is not over, till God sends His angel of death to summon us home. And, if true to our name of Catholic, if true to our ancestry in the faith, that angel must find us somewhere on the field, with our faces towards the foe and our swords in our hands.

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